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HELPS  
TO A  
DEVOUT LIFE  
LAWSON.



03

# HELPS TO A DEVOUT LIFE:

BEING

## A Treatise on Religious Duties.

BY THE LATE

REV. GEORGE LAWSON, D.D.,

PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY, SELKIRK.

---

"I bless Thee, O Heavenly Father, Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, for that Thou hast vouchsafed to remember me, a poor creature. I will always bless and glorify Thee, with Thine only-begotten Son, and the Holy Ghost the Comforter, for ever and ever."—THOMAS A KEMPIS.

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TO THE  
REVEREND PRINCIPAL HARPER, D.D.,  
AND THE  
OTHER SURVIVING MINISTERS OF THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
WHO STUDIED AT THE HALL IN SELKIRK,

This Volume,  
WHICH MAY RECALL CERTAIN CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES IN THE  
TEACHING OF THEIR VENERATED PROFESSOR,

IS

Respectfully Dedicated.



## PREFACE.

---

**M**OST of Dr. Lawson's works are now out of print. Of late I have been frequently asked to undertake the republication of the more important of them, and might have been induced to do so, but for another suggestion which commended itself more to my mind. I allude to an oft-repeated request on the part of Brethren in the Ministry, that I should publish from MSS. in my possession a few more of his Commentaries on different books of the Bible. The late Dr. John Brown, of Edinburgh, took a lively interest in this proposal. Shortly before his death, he wrote, urging the publication of a series of expository discourses to which he had listened with delight in the morning of life.

Such a work would certainly sustain its Author's reputation for learning and sound judgment; but, from its size and character, would necessarily be somewhat expensive, and limited in circulation.



For the present, I send forth this little treatise, which is likely to prove useful to a wider circle of readers. It consists of selections from a few of his Lectures on Systematic Theology. These are abridged, and altered in form, but the substance of them remains. In the treatment of his subject it may be noted, that with the sagacity, appositeness of scriptural illustration, and clear statement of truth which distinguish his other writings, there are interwoven such affectionate counsels and tender appeals to the conscience, as evince the Professor's anxiety to help and guide his Students in the matter of personal religion. It is hoped this feature of the work may render it specially profitable to the young.

It is designed to be a book for the closet. In this age of engrossing worldliness, such faithful enforcements of Christian duty are much needed, and fitted, through the Divine blessing, to promote that practical godliness, which is at once the outcome and safeguard of a "Devout Life."

JOHN LAWSON.

SELKIRK, 10th October, 1878.

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## INTRODUCTORY.

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“My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee ; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding ; . . . then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.”—  
PROVERBS ii. 1, 2, 5.

**I**F we give heed to the instructions of Solomon, we “shall understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path” (ver. 9); but it does not follow that, in seeking information concerning the complete and perfect will of God, we should confine our attention to the book of Proverbs.


God has, indeed, given us a comprehensive statement of duty in that portion of Scripture. Wisdom speaks to us by the lips of the wise king of Israel. The Queen of Sheba, who came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear his wisdom, will rise up in the judgment and condemn us if we refuse to receive

4



his words, and keep his commandments. Yet the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. There are great things which he in vain desired to see and hear,—which have now been clearly revealed to men for the obedience of faith. In addition to what was “said by them of old time,” who testified beforehand of the coming of Christ, increased light has been thrown on the plan of salvation, and consequently upon the great motives and principles of human duty, by the writers of the New Testament. “In these last days God hath spoken unto us by his Son” (Heb. i. 1). He came into the world to accomplish and reveal the Divine will (John i. 18). Had Solomon lived in gospel times he could not have said that there was no “new thing under the sun.” The Lord created a new thing on the earth when the “Word was made flesh,” and became the “revealer of the Father,” the Great Prophet of the Church!

Angels were astonished at the wondrous discoveries of love and wisdom made known to men in the face of Christ Jesus. More particularly, in connection with the person and work of the Lord Jesus, we have been better instructed in regard to the reciprocal relations and respective operations of the three Persons of the Godhead in the economy of grace, and the corresponding obligations resting on



the people of God. The truth on this subject was not altogether unknown to the ancient Church. Solomon summons men to listen to the voice of Jesus, as the Eternal "Wisdom of God," "whom he possessed in the beginning of his way, before his works of old." Nor is he silent about the Holy Spirit, and His gracious influence in applying the instructions of Divine wisdom to the soul. But as prophecies are best understood after their accomplishment, so the special agency of each Person of the Trinity in the work of human salvation is most clearly set forth in the account which the New Testament gives of the performance of the mercy promised to the fathers. "Through the tender mercy of our God, the dayspring from on high hath visited us." We now understand many things stated in the Old Testament much better than the holy men who were employed in committing them to writing.

Whilst we prize our superior privileges, let us improve them by walking in the light of the Lord, and conscientiously performing the duties we owe to each of the Divine Persons, in whose name we have been baptised, and received into the fellowship of the visible Church.

"He hath showed thee, O man, what is good ; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do

justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ? ” (Micah vi. 8).

“ Fear God, and keep his commandments : for this is the whole duty of man ” (Eccles. xii. 13).

OF THE

Duties we owe to the Lord Jesus Christ.

---

**T**HE three Persons of the Godhead are equal in power and glory. Each is entitled to supreme love, veneration, and worship; and it is not to be supposed that we dishonour any of the Divine Persons by placing one of them before the others. The Father is the first Person in the Godhead, yet we find Him mentioned second in the well-known apostolic benediction—"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen" (2 Cor. xiii. 14).

The special office of the Son, the second Person in the Godhead, is set forth in these words—"There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. ii. 5). No man cometh unto the Father but by Him. By Him we believe in God, and are accepted as righteous in His sight. "Ye who sometimes were far off are

made nigh by the blood of Christ. . . . For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father " (Eph. ii. 13, 18).

It is not, therefore, out of place to begin the consideration of religious duties, by dwelling first and chiefly, on those which we owe to our blessed Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

" This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent " (John xvii. 3).

### I.—THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST.

" Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord : his going forth is prepared as the morning ; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth."—HOSEA vi. 3.

Who should seek to know the Lord Jesus ? All men without exception, whether high or low, rich or poor, young or old. " Doth not wisdom cry ? . . . Unto you, O men, I call ; and my voice is to the sons of man " (Prov. viii. 1-4). But " wherefore is a price put into our hands to get wisdom if we have no heart to it ? " Have we not precious souls ? Are they not lost ? Is there any Saviour but Jesus ? Can we be saved through Him without knowing Him ? " Where there is no vision the people perish." But where vision is neglected and despised, people must perish more miserably than where the means of religious knowledge are not enjoyed. " For unto whomsoever much is given,

of him shall be much required" (Luke xii. 48). Ignorant and uneducated persons should seek to know Christ. The entrance of His word will give them light; "it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Ps. cxix. 130). Men of genius and learning should seek the knowledge of Christ, for without it their talents and acquirements will only intensify their misery in the place of woe. Awakened sinners should acquaint themselves with Him who is the only Saviour of the lost, and from whom only they can obtain relief from their wretchedness. Believers, who are already rejoicing in His salvation, should desire to grow in the knowledge of Him whom their souls love; as yet they know nothing as they ought to know, or as they shall know hereafter (1 Cor. viii. 2). Let not the poor imagine that they may warrantably neglect the means of knowing Christ, because most of their time is spent in labouring for their daily bread. They are not on that account to be guilty of preferring "the meat that perisheth to the meat that endureth unto everlasting life!" Let not the rich or noble act as if their dignity raised them above the necessity of becoming acquainted with Him to whom they owe all temporal blessings. Such, from their greater opportunities of acquiring information, are less excusable than the poor, if "they incline not their ears unto wisdom, and apply their hearts to the noblest kind of understanding!"

The young should learn without delay what the Bible tells of Him who said, "I love them

that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me."

The old come far short of knowing Christ as they ought; and should spend their declining years in the pursuit of that knowledge which is better for them than thousands of gold and silver (Phil. iii. 3).

#### THE ELEMENTS OF THIS KNOWLEDGE.

What should we seek to know concerning Christ? His excellencies are innumerable, and, so far as possible, we should seek to become acquainted with them all. Something may and ought to be known by us of His original and underived glories, and of the love He cherished and expressed for us in the "counsels of peace" before we or the world existed. Then He was by the Father, as one brought up with Him, and was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him; and His delights were with the sons of men (Prov. viii. 30, 31). We can never expect fully to understand the "great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." But even this mystery has not been revealed in vain. We may know so much of the nature and design of our Saviour's incarnation as shall make us rejoice in His ability and willingness to save all that come unto God by Him, and as shall prepare us for "seeing Him as He is" in the world of glory (John i. 14).

The offices to which He has been appointed by the Father, and the gracious relations in which He

stands to His people, should be the subjects of earnest study. We should search into the glory that encircles Him, as the High Priest of our profession, "who was once offered to bear the sins of many," and who "ever liveth to make intercession for them;" —as "a Prophet, mighty in deed and word," who, by His Word and Spirit, reveals to men the will of God; —as the King whom God has set on His holy hill of Zion, to subdue His people to Himself, and who "must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet." If we have been reconciled to God through His sacrificial death, enlightened by Him in the knowledge of the truth, delivered from the power of Satan, and made His loving, loyal subjects, then we ought to know that He has become our Surety, our Elder Brother, our Shepherd, our Husband, our Head. We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. His Church is the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. If we love our earthly relations, and seek to be acquainted with everything relating to them, much more should we seek full and accurate knowledge of Him who is "a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother." There is no Friend like the Lord Jesus! His offices and titles are not empty names, but gracious realities, from which we may derive unfailing consolation.

The wonderful things that Christ has done and suffered in accomplishing our salvation afford materials for frequent and profitable meditation. What He did for the ancient Church from the days of Adam until the time of His appearance in



the flesh. What works of power and mercy were wrought by Him while He lived in a state of humiliation on earth. What grace was shown forth, in His sufferings and death, in His resurrection from the dead as the first-fruits of them that slept, in His glorious ascension, and sitting down at the right hand of God. What He has been doing for the Church since He left our world. How He has been overruling the events of Providence for the advancement of His kingdom; and how the history of nations, no less than the history of churches, has been the history of the acts of His gracious administration (Eph. i. 22). What gifts He has been bestowing upon some of His people for the good of others; and how each of them has been the object of His special solicitude and care. In these things we just behold a little portion of His ways. Happy are they who observe and understand them (Ps. cvii. 43).

What Christian can call to mind His mighty acts without exclaiming, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints" (Rev. v. 9, 10; xv. 3).

The honours that have been or shall yet be paid to Jesus should engage our earnest attention. He has been the confidence of His people in every age; loved, trusted, and obeyed by all who looked to Him for the salvation of their souls. He is praised and honoured, not only by the Church which He has redeemed, but by all the angels of God, who

are the fellow-servants of them that keep the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus. These glorious, happy beings cannot claim Christ as their own Saviour, but they never cease to honour and praise Him as the Saviour of lost sinners of the human race, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Rev. v. 12).

When Isaiah saw His glory, and spake of Him, he saw Him encompassed with seraphs, who celebrated the praises of His glorious holiness. When John saw Him in His state of exaltation, he heard the angels sounding forth the praises of His grace, and all the creatures which are in heaven and the earth, and under the earth, and in the sea, heard he saying, "Amen. Blessing, and glory, and honour, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Isa. vi. 3; Rev. v. 11-14). We see not yet all creatures praising and honouring our glorious King. We see too many of them lifting up unrighteous weapons of rebellion against Him; but the word is gone out of His own mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto Him every knee shall bow and every tongue shall swear (Isa. xlv. 23). It cannot but fill our hearts with joy to contemplate those honours that are paid to Christ by believers, by angels, and by all the creatures of God. But our joy must rise still higher when we contemplate the honours conferred upon Him by His eternal Father.

These are the honours which Christ Himself chiefly regards, and in which we ourselves are most deeply interested. They are the sure proofs that our confidence in Him is not misplaced, for God hath raised Him from the dead and given Him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God; and the same exceeding greatness of power is manifested in us, which wrought in Christ when God raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principalities and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world, but *likewise* in that which is to come (1 Pet. i. 20, 21; Eph. i. 1, 19-23).

Christians cannot but rejoice to know that Christ hath gone to the Father, and is crowned by Him with glory and honour. Nor will they be transported with less pleasure when they learn what honour is done to our Lord by His own Spirit, who is His agent in the world, and who glorifies Him, by taking the things which are Christ's and showing them unto us (John xvi. 14).

It is needful that we should know the position which Christ holds in His own religion. There are some who allow no higher place to Christ in practical Christianity than Moses held in the religion of the Jews. But believers are better taught. To them Christ is "all and in all." He is the object of their faith. He is their hope, their righteousness, their joy, their life, the Rock of their salvation, on whom is all their dependence for time and

for eternity. If we give Him only a part where everything is due, we dishonour Christ, and turn His religion into a mere shadow, because, rejecting the animating soul, we hold fast only a lifeless form. What benefit can we derive from the law if we know not Christ as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth? What consolation can we derive from the Gospel if we know not Christ to be the sum and substance of the Gospel? It is the glory of the Gospel that it is the ministration of righteousness and of the Spirit. Now, the righteousness which it ministers is the righteousness of Christ. The spirit which is ministered by the Gospel is the Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus (Rom. x. 6).

Such are some things revealed concerning Christ which are specially worthy of our most serious consideration; as yet it is but little that we can know of His personal and mediatorial glory, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Cor. xiii. 12).

#### THE NATURE OF THIS KNOWLEDGE.

Consider what sort of knowledge regarding Christ we should seek to obtain.

There is a knowledge of Christ which is obtained by the simple exercise of our rational powers. There is another kind of knowledge which proceeds from the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the know-

ledge of Christ. It was of the latter that Christ said to Peter, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." This sort of knowledge excels the former as much as light excels darkness. If we thus know the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall know the certainty of the things wherein we have been instructed by His Word; and while we see the beauty and glory of the truths that relate to Him, we shall feel their power, and live under their influence. "The branch of the Lord" will be beautiful and glorious in our eyes, and all worldly excellencies will appear contemptible, when compared with the brightness of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A speculative knowledge of Christ is valuable on account of the use that is made of it by the Spirit, who is often pleased to make it really beneficial to our souls, by enabling us to understand the importance, and to see the excellency of what we know. But a knowledge that is merely speculative produces evil rather than good effects. It is at the best like a winter's sun, which gives light without heat. Very frequently it puffs up the soul with a fond and false apprehension of its own wisdom. The Laodiceans had no other kind of knowledge, and they fancied themselves rich and increased with goods, when in reality they were poor and miserable and blind and naked. It was knowledge of a very different character that Paul desired when he wished to know Christ, "and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings,

being made conformable unto his death" (Phil. iii. 10).

When men have no other knowledge than that which consists in uninfluential notions, they know nothing as they ought to know. That man truly knows Christ, in the right sense of the term, who is taught by the Spirit to obey Christ; the man who says that he knows Him, and yet refuses to obey Him, is a liar, and the truth is not in him (1 John ii. 3, 4, 5; Eph. iv. 21-24).

#### REASONS FOR SEEKING THIS KNOWLEDGE.

Why should we seek to know Christ?

Our deep personal interest in Christ makes the knowledge of Him exceedingly valuable. Children are expected to know their own parents, and servants their masters. Much more may it be expected of creatures that they know their Creator and Preserver, who shall also be their Judge. God made us, and all things in the world, by Jesus Christ. He rules us by Him, to whom He hath given power over all creatures. And He hath appointed a day in which He will judge us by Jesus Christ. Can anything be of greater personal consequence than the knowledge of Him who stands towards us in such relations, and to whom we belong by a title so unquestionable? Then we are lost creatures, and must for ever perish without Christ. He is the only Saviour of self-ruined sinners of the human family. His blood is the only true atonement. No power but His can break our fetters and bestow on us the glorious

liberty of the sons of God. It must therefore be a matter of infinite importance to us to be acquainted with everything that can give us just apprehensions of the character of Jesus, of the efficacy of His death, the love that is in His heart, and the reliance which it may be safe for us to place on Him. If there were any other Saviour, we might safely be ignorant of Him who is the Author of our religion; but if He be the only hope of the guilty, it is strange infatuation, indeed, to continue willingly ignorant of the glory of His person, of the riches of His grace, of the extent of His saving power, and of the marvellous things which He hath done!

Further, the knowledge of Christ is desirable, for it comprehends all we need to know for our present direction and our eternal happiness. The knowledge of Christ includes the knowledge of God the Father; for he who hath seen the Son hath seen the Father also. It contains in it the knowledge of heaven; for wherein does the happiness of heaven consist, but in seeing Christ, and being like Christ. It embraces also the knowledge of human duty; for Christ is our King and Leader in the ways of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment. If we know Christ, we know everything that is necessary to furnish us for every good work, for we are complete in Him who is the Head of all principality and power. If we know Christ, we know the way wherein we should walk, we are acquainted with the springs of all true consolation. It may be said that we know all things, for Christ

is "all and in all," and in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. But if we know not Christ, we are blind, and cannot see afar off,—we are yet unacquainted with the first principles of true wisdom, and with the most essential requisites of true happiness!

Hence it is that the happy effects of the knowledge of Christ also render it exceedingly desirable.

We cannot believe in an unknown Saviour, and if we know Him as we ought, we cannot but believe in Him (Ps. ix. 10; John vi. 40). We must be for ever lost if we are not lovers of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (1 Cor. xvi. 22); but we cannot love Him without knowing Him, and if we know Him we cannot withhold from Him our supreme affection. If we know Christ, it will be impossible for us not to love the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, for Christ is the brightness of His Father's glory, the express image of His person, in whom He appears to be not only infinitely glorious in Himself, but infinitely gracious to us. If we know Christ we shall be like Christ, for "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 18).

The revelations which God has been pleased to give us of His Son form powerful motives to diligence in this noblest of all studies.

We could have known nothing concerning Jesus Christ without a Divine revelation. The light of



nature reveals nothing regarding Him. But from the beginning, communications about Christ have been given us from on high. God Himself spake of Him in the ears of Adam as that blessed "Seed of the woman who should bruise the head of the old serpent." New discoveries of Jesus were made by the ministries of Moses, of David, of Isaiah, and other holy men, to whom God spake, and whom He furnished with treasures of knowledge, not for themselves only, but for us. Had we no other information about Christ save that which the ancient Church possessed, we should still be quite inexcusable if we did not search the Scriptures daily to know what they testified concerning Him. But our advantages are far superior to those enjoyed under previous dispensations. We have not only the prophets but the apostles for our instructors in the knowledge of Christ.

The mystery which was hid from ages and generations is now made manifest to the sons of men. Christ Himself has become our Teacher. From His Father's bosom He has come to give us the knowledge of His Father, and of Himself. He did not indeed write the books of the New Testament with His own hand; nor does He preach in our streets or churches, as He did in Jerusalem and Galilee. But the Scriptures were dictated by His Holy Spirit; and the writers of the New Testament were directed to record such of the discourses spoken by Him, in the days of His flesh, as He knew would be most useful to the Church in every age. Now, if this

Divine Instructor came from heaven to earth, to give us the knowledge of Himself by words, deeds, and sufferings; if He still speaks to us from heaven,—we, surely, are shutting our eyes against the clearest light, if we refuse to receive the instruction He communicates. Who but those who are in love with folly will refuse to listen?

But our understandings are very narrow and corrupt. By nature we are blind,—we are darkness itself. Can the light of the knowledge of the glory of God ever make its way into our minds? We never could have formed any right apprehensions of the mystery of Christ if we had been left entirely to ourselves. But through the mercy of God, the Spirit of counsel and knowledge is promised. We are directed to pray for this Spirit, and to depend upon Him for that spiritual enlightenment which will enable us to understand what the Scriptures reveal regarding our blessed Redeemer. Blessed with such abundant means of information, how blind must we be to our own interest, how insensible to the obligations of duty and gratitude, if we do not study diligently to increase in the knowledge of God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ. If God had only given us ministers of the Gospel to explain His truths, their instructions, however valuable, would not have availed to the chasing away of darkness from our souls; but when He has given us such a full and comprehensive revelation of His Son, and crowned the gift with the promise of the Holy Spirit to make it effectual, what should hinder us from digging

hopefully for the knowledge of Christ as for silver, and searching for it as for hid treasure?

#### THE MEANS OF OBTAINING THIS KNOWLEDGE.

How shall we best attain the knowledge of Christ, and increase in it more and more?

We have already advanced very considerably on the way, if we are animated with a sincere and earnest desire to obtain it. If we regard this wisdom as more precious than rubies, and if all the things we can desire appear to us unworthy to be compared with it; if we esteem the words of God's mouth more than our necessary food, because they bear testimony concerning Christ,—we shall soon be found rejoicing in the knowledge of our blessed Saviour! It is a sign that we already know Him in some measure, when we cannot think ourselves happy without knowing Him better.

Our anxiety thus to know Him will make us diligent in the use of means; and the means which God has promised to bless may be used with a joyful confidence of success, "for then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord." The desires which His own Spirit has kindled within our souls shall not be disappointed. We must seek out the Book of the Lord and read. The Scriptures are the Word of Christ. They were designed and fitted by the infinite wisdom of God to give the knowledge of Christ unto men. From beginning to end they testify of Him (John v. 39). We must make use of the public ordinances, which Christ has

appointed for conveying the knowledge of Himself to our souls (Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13). We must wait upon the ministrations of the sanctuary, receive the truths preached, with faith and love, meditate upon them, converse about them, and practise them in our lives (Prov. viii. 34, 35; Matt. xxviii. 20).

We ought to edify each other by religious conversation. Christ is present with His people when their converse is such as it ought to be, and makes their pious intercourse the means of mutual communications of light (Luke xxiv. 15, 27, 31). Frequent meditation on Christ tends to increase our knowledge of Him (Ps. cxix. 97-99). By holy meditation, we may preach to ourselves more effectually than the most eloquent preacher. While we muse on the truths we already know, they become clearer, and new truths necessarily connected with them, spring up to our view. Earnest prayer to the Father of lights is absolutely necessary for those who desire to obtain the knowledge of Christ. The Lord alone giveth true wisdom; out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding, and therefore we ought to cry to Him for wisdom, and to lift up our voice for understanding. The more we actually know of Christ, the more sensible will we become of our remaining ignorance, and of the value of increased knowledge, and thus shall we be led to importunate prayer for further communications of light. What man in David's time was so wise as David himself, and yet how frequently and earnestly

did he entreat fresh wisdom from above. In proof of this, we need only turn to Ps. cxix.

Finally, we ought to depend upon Christ, as "made of God unto us wisdom." He is given for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people; for a "light to lighten the Gentiles," that He may be God's salvation unto the ends of the earth. He hath graciously promised His Spirit, to take of His own things and show them unto us. This Spirit knoweth all the deep things of Christ, and in His light we shall see light. He irradiates the minds of believers, and makes their path like the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Whilst we seek the knowledge of Christ for ourselves, let us not neglect others. We are bound, according to our ability, to make Him known unto all around us, especially unto those whom Divine Providence has placed under our charge. If the knowledge of Christ is of great value in our eyes, it will be a pleasure to impart it to others. Happy are the men who are really, and not merely in their own estimation, guides of the blind, lights to them that are in darkness. Whilst they water others, they shall themselves also be watered, and whatever success they may have in their labours of love, they will shine at last as the brightness of the firmament, and as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matt. xiii. 43).

## II.—FAITH IN CHRIST.

"These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that believing ye might have life through His name."—JOHN xx. 31.

We ought to believe in Jesus Christ to the saving of our souls.

Faith in Christ is a necessary duty. There is no salvation except in Christ ; and without faith in His name, we can obtain none of His precious blessings. "Saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness : " "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved ; he that believeth not shall be damned." If so, who would not wish above all things to know the character of Him in whom we are called on to believe,—what is meant by believing on Him,—what ground we have for our faith,—and what motives or encouragements we have for looking exclusively to Him for the salvation of our souls ?

## IN WHOM ARE WE TO BELIEVE ?

How shall we believe in Him of whom we have not heard ? We cannot trust in Christ for salvation unless assured on unimpeachable evidence that He is able and willing to save us. If He were able but not willing to save, His power would be the object of terror, and not of confidence. If not almighty, His willingness to save would

be worthless, for only an omnipotent arm could deliver sinners from the ruins of their fallen condition. But blessed be God, from the writings of the prophets and apostles we have the most perfect assurance of the infinite grace and infinite power of our Lord Jesus Christ. Take only the testimony of John, the beloved disciple, who wrote his gospel that we might believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that believing, we might have life through His name. In its opening sentence he gives such an account of the person of Christ as must convince every unprejudiced reader that our Saviour is the Great God, equal in power and glory with the Father, and therefore "mighty to save."

"In the beginning was the Word." This "Word" was a distinct Person from another Person who is called God. Not differing in essence, for the Word who was in the beginning with God is God. In no respect inferior, for He who lay in the bosom of the Father was the Creator of all things, and "without him was not anything made that was made." If Christ had not been a Divine Person, He could not have been entrusted with the salvation of our souls. Only "in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength;" "who is God, but the Lord; who is a rock, save our God?"

"The Word was made flesh," and tabernacled among the Jews. Most of them saw no beauty in the incarnate Word that they should desire Him; but the men whose eyes were opened by the grace

of God "saw his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." He was from eternity appointed to be the Saviour of self-ruined sinners. In consequence of this appointment, He took part of our flesh and blood, that He might obey the law, and satisfy all its demands in that nature by which it had been violated. The Messiah was cut off, but not for Himself. For sinful men He lived a holy life, and died an accursed death. Being made perfect through sufferings, He became the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him. Had Jesus continued for ever under the power of death, our faith and our hope had been vain. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and is become the first-fruits of them that slept." God hath not only raised Him from the dead, but all power in heaven and earth has been given unto Him, that He might give eternal life to all that believe on His name.

Such is the account which the Scriptures give of Him in whom we are called to believe. They assure us that He is a Person truly Divine and yet incarnate,—having assumed human nature that He might do everything needful for our salvation. Further, they assure us that every saving office belongs to Him by His Father's appointment, and His own voluntary undertaking; that He is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world; a light given to the Gentiles, that He might be God's salvation to the ends of the earth; a King highly exalted, seated on a throne of mercy, that He



may dispense in rich abundance spiritual blessings to perishing sinners. In the representations given of the Lord Jesus Christ we find everything fitted to impart perfect confidence in His ability and willingness to save. We behold in Him all Divine excellencies, every saving office, an exhaustless fulness of grace and truth, an everlasting righteousness, and a Complete Salvation, purchased by His precious blood, placed before our view, offered and recommended to our acceptance by the blessed God, the Author of the glorious Gospel. What shall we say to these things? Shall we not say with joy and gratitude, "We will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is our strength and our song, and he also is become our salvation."

When we believe in Christ, we give not that glory to another which is due only to God (Ps. cxlvi. 3, 4, 5). The confidence we place in the Redeemer is not alienated from God. Our justification is through faith in Christ, as Paul shows at great length in his epistle to the Romans; and yet in the same epistle he sometimes speaks of that faith by which we are justified as if it were placed in God the Father—"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. x. 9; iv. 24). To believe in Christ as an exalted Saviour is to believe in God, who raised Him from the dead.

We cannot come to Christ without coming to

God by Him, and we cannot come to God but by Jesus Christ (John xiv. 6).

The name of Christ is frequently represented as the object of our faith. By His name is meant the full representation made of Him in Holy Scripture. We cannot believe the word of truth without believing in Christ. For what is the Gospel, but the revelation of Christ as our Saviour; and what is the faith of the Gospel, but faith in Him whom it so clearly displays to our view (Rom i. 16, 17).

#### THE NATURE OF FAITH.

What is that faith which is so necessary for our salvation, and so highly commended in the Bible?

There have been many disputes about the true nature of faith; and yet one would think that the characteristics of this grace must be fully described in a book which was designed by Divine Wisdom to be a light to our feet and a lamp to our path.


If the Scriptures do not clearly explain the way of salvation, how can they be a light to guide our feet in the way that leads to life everlasting? We are not to suppose that some men are saved in one way and some in another. "There is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus." There is no other way in which we can receive salvation from Jesus but by faith; and there is only one kind of saving faith. How important, therefore, the question, "What is faith in Jesus Christ?" How

dangerous to be mistaken on a point of such vital consequence !

It is, however, a comfortable thought that different men may exercise the same faith in Christ, and obtain the same salvation through His name, who use very different language in describing their faith in Him.

All men do not mean the same thing by the same words. Those who deny something to belong to the nature of faith which others hold to be essential to it, may, in a greater or less degree, practise, under another name, that which they deny to be needful. There are some, for instance, who allege that it forms no part of our faith to assure ourselves of salvation, and yet they may really enjoy personal assurance of salvation by receiving and resting upon Christ. There are others who maintain that coming to Jesus is a distinct exercise of the soul from believing, and yet allow that it is inseparably connected with faith. It is, however, of great importance to have clear, precise, and distinct apprehensions of the true nature of faith, that the exercise of our hearts in believing may not be perplexed and encumbered by mistakes or doubts. Besides, if we err simply in words in regard to this grace, we may lead other men into errors of judgment or practice, by conveying to them our sentiments in language to which they may affix very different ideas from our own.

One thing is certain, our faith, if genuine, must be in exact accordance with the word of the truth



of the Gospel. Hence, in Scripture it is called obedience to the Gospel, or the "obedience of faith." If we receive the testimony of man, the testimony of God is greater; and if we know what is meant by the belief of a man's testimony, we may from this form a clear idea of the nature of that grace by which we set to our seal that God is true.

It may be observed, therefore—

That Faith must include a full persuasion of the truth of those great doctrines concerning Christ which are revealed in Scripture.

We must believe in our hearts that God hath raised Him from the dead (Rom. xiv. 9). But it does not follow from that expression that no more is necessary to be believed than that single article of Christian doctrine. The belief of that doctrine includes the belief of the whole truth included in our salvation by Christ—His divinity, His incarnation, His substitution, His sufferings, His glory. We accordingly find the same stress laid upon the belief of other parts of the work of Christ that is here laid upon belief in the fact of His resurrection (1 John v. 1, 5; John viii. 24).

A firm, intelligent assent to the doctrines concerning our Lord Jesus Christ is less common than many suppose. Numbers give but a wavering, precarious assent to the capital articles of our religion. They scarcely know what they believe, or why! They were trained up in the persuasion that the Bible is the Word of God, just as the Turks are

trained in the belief that the Alcoran is a Divine book.

If they hear no objections made to the truth of Christianity, they continue in the profession of what they believe; and if they be persons of decent behaviour and steady minds, they will not be easily shaken by anything that may be alleged against their faith, although they can give no better reason for the belief that is in them, than the Turk can give for believing that Mahomet was the Apostle of God. But if their tempers are flexible and their judgments unimpressed with reverence for ancient institutions and creeds, very trifling arguments, or even foolish jests, will be apt to shake or overturn the whole fabric of their belief. It is not, however, to be denied that men may be able to describe and defend their creed with strong arguments, and may continue to profess their belief of its truth with unshaken firmness, whilst they are still destitute of the faith of God's elect. It is certain that the faith which is merely the effect of reason, or of natural principles, cannot be that faith which distinguishes Christians from other men; for it cannot be doubted that there are arguments so conclusive in favour of the doctrine of Christ, that they cannot fail to approve themselves to the judgment of every candid, thoughtful inquirer.

The fact that Jesus wrought many miracles cannot well be called in question; and if so, then the doctrine confirmed by them can admit of as little

doubt. Men, by the mere force of truth, may be convinced that Jesus Christ really did come from God, and that His religion is Divine, while they themselves continue in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. We meet with not a few illustrations of this sad truth in the Word of God. At one of the passovers which Jesus attended at Jerusalem, we are told that many believed on His name when they saw the miracles which He did; but Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because "He knew all men." These men were surely destitute of saving faith, for all true believers are regarded and treated by Jesus as His friends.

There are others of whom it is said that "they believed in Jesus," and yet we find them continuing under the reigning power of worldly dispositions (John xii. 42, 43). The faith ascribed to Simon Magus may be taken as another instance of a sort of belief which came short of securing the salvation of the soul (Acts viii. 21-23).

The assent given to the truths of Christianity by such hypocrites or formalists is something altogether different from that of those whose eyes have been enlightened, and whose hearts have been disposed to believe, by the influence of the Holy Spirit. "It is the will of him that sent me," saith Christ, "that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life." That we may believe in Christ to eternal life, it is necessary that we should *see* Him; and they who really see Him in His beauty and glory, assent to the truth of the

Gospel, not merely because it has been confirmed by miracles, and prophecies, and other incontrovertible evidences, but because they see in it so much of the love of God as proves it to be from heaven;—just as the marks of His eternal power and Godhead on the face of nature proclaim Him to be the Creator of the material universe. God Himself shines into their minds to give them the light of the knowledge of His own glory in the face of Jesus Christ. He speaks to their ears and hearts in the Gospel. They receive it not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the Word of God.

The glory and salvation of Christ is manifested to them, not by flesh and blood, but by the Father who is in heaven (Matt. xvi. 17).

Along with this assent there must be a cordial reception of Christ as the gift of God to sinners.

Our faith must correspond with the declarations of the Gospel. But the Gospel not merely reveals Christ to the understanding—it sets Him before us as the unspeakable gift of God, to be gratefully received and trusted in.

Jesus preaching to a great multitude of unbelievers said, “My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.” These men had asked Christ to give them such bread from heaven as Moses gave to their fathers in the desert. Jesus tells them that God was much kinder to them than they desired, He had given them bread as much superior to that given to their fathers as the substance is better

than the shadow. Every Israelite in the wilderness was permitted to go out of the camp and freely gather and eat the manna; and every hearer of the Gospel has an equal right to receive Christ, and with Him all the blessings of salvation. God in His Word makes to them a free grant of Christ. There are, alas! too many who despise this gift. They will have none of Christ, they do not feel their need of Him, or they are not fully convinced of God's sincerity in calling them to accept of Christ and His salvation;—but notwithstanding all this, the offer is to them as well as to others, and if they will only arise and come, they shall not be sent empty away.


When the manna fell around the camp of Israel there might be some to whom the precious gift was useless, through their inability to partake of it. The sick, for example, whose "soul abhorreth dainty meat," would be unable even to eat of that heavenly bread. Still they had the same right to it as their neighbours. In like manner, all who hear the Gospel have a right given them by God to receive Christ and all His benefits. If they are not nourished and strengthened by the spiritual manna, the reason is to be sought for in themselves. They have no relish for the bread of heaven, or no confidence in the grace and truth of the Giver of it. We cannot receive the precious gift of God if we have no real desire for the blessings of grace.

No man can believe in Christ in opposition to his own will. But mere desire is not enough. An



avaricious man may be anxious to obtain food, without eating it. A criminal may earnestly desire a free pardon though he has not the slightest hope of receiving it. And so there may be many eager desires for salvation in the heart of one who is still a stranger to saving faith. His desires have not for their object that complete salvation which is revealed in the Gospel, but something which men call by the same name, although God has never promised to give it—a deliverance, not from sin itself, but from the miserable consequences of sin. Sincere desires for deliverance from the present dominion and power of sin are inseparable from true faith, and shall certainly be satisfied (Matt. v. 6).

When we receive Christ we appropriate Him as our own. Isaiah directs us to this exercise of faith when he declares, "Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength!" There are indeed true believers who cannot use these words as the joyous record of their own experience. Though their faith is genuine, it is feeble and imperfect, and they are often harassed with doubts of their saving interest in Christ. There is flesh as well as spirit, unbelief as well as faith, in real believers, though these remnants of unbelief are a burden to their hearts. Men are sometimes vexed with doubts concerning some of the doctrines of our holy religion, though clinging with all their souls to the grand fundamental truths wrapt up in the method of a sinner's justification in the sight of God.



They may also stagger at the promises of God through unbelief, although they would not for a thousand worlds let go that confidence which will have a full recompense of reward. There is nothing wished for by them with greater earnestness than to be able to say, "Behold, the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song, and he also is become my salvation;"—but as yet the limit of their attainments is just that of the poor man, who could only say, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." They have as much of assurance as of faith; but their faith is weak, and therefore their personal assurance of salvation through Christ is disturbed by anxious apprehensions. Christ is greatly displeased with such fears,—but He is pleased with their deep anxiety about salvation, with their fervent desires, and with such faith as they have. The bruised reed He will not break, and the smoking flax He will not quench: He will bring forth judgment unto victory. Though expressed in different words and phrases, this will be admitted by all,—that when men come to Christ, and trust in Him, they receive Him; and their assured confidence of being saved by Him is just according to the measure of their faith. Further, it must be admitted that those are dangerously deceived who place a presumptuous confidence in Christ, in room of that humble faith which looks to Him alone as the Saviour of the lost.

We read of many wicked persons in the days of Isaiah and Micah who called themselves of the

"Holy City," and stayed themselves upon "the God of Israel, whose name is the Lord of Hosts," but not in truth and in righteousness (Isa. xlviii. 1, 2; Micah iii. 11). When the ancient Jews apostatised from God, they still hoped that He would save them from their enemies, because they were His peculiar people; because His temple was amongst them; because they were the seed of the patriarchs; because they thought their crimes were no crimes at all, or at least not such as deserved the wrath of God (Jer. ii. 23-35; vii. 4; Isa. lviii. 1-3).

A similar spirit is manifested now-a-days by those who build their hopes of salvation on the gospel privileges they enjoy, or on their fancied innocence, or their good wishes and resolutions. If they look for eternal life, in some measure, to the free grace of God, they also look for at least a part of it to themselves. They cannot deny that they are sinners, but refuse to believe that sin is so malignant in its nature as to expose men, by a righteous sentence, to everlasting condemnation. Such persons presume upon the mercy of the Lord, and seek safety in what they shall discover to be a "refuge of lies" (Isa. xxviii. 16, 17).

So it is with those who in their unscriptural views regard Christ as if He were a Saviour from hell, but not a Saviour from sin; and who put asunder what God has inseparably joined together, —salvation from sin and salvation from wrath. To such men eternal misery is the object of dread, but deliverance from the bondage of corruption is a

matter of comparative indifference. They forget that where there is pardon there must also be purity. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus," said the angel, "for he shall save his people from their sins;" from their power and defilement, no less than from their guilt and penalty.

Our faith must correspond to the characters under which Christ is set before us in the Gospel.

These are all suited to our needs as sinful creatures. The first thing that disquiets an awakened sinner is the consciousness of guilt. The number and heinousness of his sins are vividly impressed on his mind, and he feels that on account of them he has become exposed to God's righteous displeasure. But when his eyes are opened to see the excellency of Christ as an atonement for sin, he rests on Him, and is emboldened to say, "Iniquities prevail against me; but as for our transgressions thou shalt purge them away." Thou shalt purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. For surely Christ was "wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

Unconverted persons are apt to imagine that it is in their own power to deliver themselves from the dominion of sin whenever they choose to put forth their full strength; and this most of them intend doing when they have had their fill of the pleasures of sin.

Widely different from this are the feelings of the man who has been really roused from spiritual sleep. He feels that he can no more deliver himself from the power of his lusts than he can merit the forgiveness of his iniquities. He groans under the oppression of his spiritual enemies, and feels that deliverance can come to him through Christ alone. On Him therefore he depends for sanctification as well as righteousness, knowing that "he bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead unto sin should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Cor. vi. 11; Rom. vii. 24, 25).

The lusts that war in our members are dangerous foes, but we must wrestle likewise with principalities and powers. It is folly to imagine that any one can triumph over such enemies in his own strength. The true believer trusts for safety and victory to the Captain of his salvation (Eph. vi. 11, 12).

We are called to the discharge of many duties, none of which by our own might can we perform in a manner acceptable; but Christ is revealed to our faith as the "Lord our strength," and we are invited to rely on Him for all needful supplies of His Spirit, as well as for the acceptance of all our holy services (Phil. iv. 13). We cannot walk alone in safety through this ensnaring world. But we have a Guide of unerring skill and almighty power in our Lord Jesus Christ, whom God has given for a Witness to the people, for a Leader and Commander to the people. We are to commit

ourselves to His guidance, that we may be led by His Word and Spirit to the place where He dwells, and where we hope to be with Him for ever (Ps. lxxiv. 24).

Whilst in this world, we need also daily supplies for the present life. For these also we must depend on Christ, to whom all judgment is committed by the Father (Matt. vi. 26-34). Here also we may lay our account with constant changes in our condition and relationships; but, through faith, we shall amid them all maintain a peaceful, happy frame of mind; for it will enable us to live under the powers of the world to come, and make us feel that all earthly vicissitudes will turn to the furtherance of our salvation, and that in all things, whether by death or life, Christ will be magnified in us.

#### THE GROUND AND WARRANT OF A SINNER'S FAITH.

It is certainly a point of the highest importance to be assured that we have sufficient ground and authority for believing on Christ. That we are fully justified in assenting to the great truths revealed in Scripture, will be denied by no one who believes the Bible to be true.

Those who make reason the rule of their faith rather than the Word of God, will doubtless find means of explaining away all that is taught us in Scripture regarding the divine and mediatorial glory of our blessed Redeemer. But those who accept the Bible as the revelation of the Divine will, and

who study it with unbiassed minds, must admit that these doctrines relating to the person and offices of Christ are set forth with sufficient clearness, and that the Gospel is hid only from those whom the god of this world hath blinded.

Even in Old Testament times the Word of God was a lamp to men's path, and a light to their feet, but now life and immortality are enlightened by the Gospel, and the "righteousness of God without the law is manifested," even that righteousness which was formerly "witnessed by the law and the prophets." Different interpretations have indeed been given of some passages of Scripture, but it does not follow that their meaning is uncertain. Let not the infirmities of men be charged against the Word of Christ. In the writings of Paul there are some things dark and "hard to be understood," but he himself assures us that he uses great plainness of speech in setting forth those truths which are of eternal importance to the souls of men (2 Cor. iv. 2-6). It would be a most unjust reflection upon a book given as the rule of our faith to allege that it leaves us at a loss to know whether our Saviour is really God, or simply a created being; whether we are indebted to Him for our entire salvation, or only for a part of it; and what is the nature and design of those offices and relations which as our Saviour He sustains. But the "law of the Lord is perfect," and in its revelation of Christ it affords firm footing for our faith. Our fathers hoped in Him, and they were saved; and

no one who places implicit confidence in Jesus shall be disappointed. We are assured that whosoever believeth in Him shall not be confounded (Rom. x. 13; Isa. xxviii. 16).

When the Bible says that *whosoever* believeth on Him shall not be ashamed, it is plain that according to the rule of His Word all men are warranted to believe in Christ. If a house had stood firm from the beginning of the world, and if we were assured that it would remain immovable till the consummation of all things, we would not hesitate to say that it had a good foundation. If all men, whatever be their tempers, capacities, characters, and circumstances, are warranted to believe in Christ for salvation, it is evident that their warrant for doing so cannot consist in anything which distinguishes one man from another; and therefore men of exceptionally good dispositions must not imagine that their right to come to Christ depends on their moral virtues or amiable behaviour. If it did, they would be more welcome to Christ and the enjoyment of His blessings than other men whose dispositions were the reverse of theirs. But that this is not the case appears abundantly plain from the Word of God. "Go," said Christ to His disciples, "and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." And "him that cometh unto me," says our gracious Saviour, "I will in no wise cast out."

There are many who take it for granted that a deep sense of sin and misery is necessary for authorising



men to believe in Jesus. It is admitted that no man will seek salvation through Christ until deeply impressed with a sense of his wretchedness through sin; but this feeling of need does not constitute his warrant to come to Christ. A man will not avail himself of the physician's skill until he feels that he is sick or suffering; but it is not his apprehension of disease or danger that gives him a right to the physician's care. A man will not think of soliciting a pardon from his prince until he finds himself condemned; but the knowledge of his perilous condition by no means entitles him to pardon. In like manner, no man will truly believe in Jesus until he is thoroughly convinced of his sin and misery; but it is not that conviction that warrants him to look to Christ for salvation. The ground of faith lies not within us, but without us, in the Gospel. Not in the frames and feelings of our own hearts, but in the finished work of Christ as set forth in the Word of truth. To all men without exception Wisdom calls, and her voice is to the sons of men, saying, "Come, eat of my bread and drink of my wine which I have mingled" (Prov. viii. 4; ix. 5).

"Come unto me," says our Lord, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." From these words some have inferred that none but those who are heavy laden with a sense of their iniquities are warranted to apply to Christ for salvation. On the supposition that such persons were referred to by our Saviour, it does not follow that they only are authorised to come to Him for rest.

All the seed of Israel are called on to fear God (Ps. xxii. 23), but we are not to conclude that to fear God is the exclusive duty of the house of Israel (Jer. x. 7). That highly-favoured people were under peculiar obligations to fear God, but all nations are bound to have regard to the will of their Creator and Judge, and make Him their fear and their dread.

So likewise, persons feeling the weight of their sins are in a position which supplies peculiar motives for their coming to Christ, but He came to call sinners in general to repentance, and if so, they are all entitled to believe in Jesus, for He is the only way to the Father, and it is only through Him that men can turn from sin unto holiness. But there is no good reason for restricting the word "heavy laden" to those burdened with a sense of sin. All men in their natural condition labour and are heavy laden; the most senseless sinners are those who are most heavily laden with iniquity (Isa. i. 3, 4). "All things are full of labour, man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." All who unsuccessfully are seeking rest are invited by Jesus to come and find it in Himself. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." Who are they that thirst? All who seek for happiness but cannot find it, because they seek it in those things which never gave happiness to any man on earth (Isa. lv. 2). It is certain that none but those who feel their absolute need of Christ will seek salvation in Him; but if they are taught that a deep sense of their

need of Christ is necessary to give them a right to Him, they will be under strong temptation to neglect the exercise of believing in Christ from day to day, and from year to year, that if possible they may establish a better right to believe in His name. And as they will never think that their sense of the evil of sin is what it ought to be, they may continue through life in a state of painful suspense as to whether or not they are warranted in placing their dependence upon Christ for salvation. But when men are fully persuaded that whatever be their state and character they are authorised and invited to come to Jesus for rest and happiness, one of the greatest stumbling-blocks in the way of the most important of all duties will be removed.

That all sinners are called by the Gospel to believe in Jesus Christ for salvation, is made very plain by the discourse of our Saviour recorded in the sixth chapter of John's Gospel. It was addressed to a class of men who were for the most part strangers to the true nature of Christ's kingdom, and who were much more interested in the comforts of the present life than in the things pertaining to life everlasting, and yet all of them, without exception, were invited to come and eat of that spiritual bread which was typified by the manna. They waited upon His ministry not because He spake as never man spake, but because they did eat of His miraculous bread, and were filled. They expressed an earnest desire that Jesus would feed them in the same way as their fathers had been fed in the wilderness. But

He tells them that He had been commissioned by His Father to give them, not the meat which perished in the using, and which when eaten could not hinder them from perishing, but the true bread, which nourished up to everlasting life. "My Father," said He, "giveth you the true bread from heaven." He gave it as really to these earthly-minded Jews, as the manna had been given to their fathers. They might forfeit the benefit of the donation, as the greater part of them actually did, by refusing to receive or to eat that bread, but their refusal did not affect the reality of the gift, or the sincerity of the Giver. It is evident that the people in general had this grant made to them as the ground of their faith. No exception is made by our Lord of any one in the crowd, although He upbraided them for their worldliness and unbelief. He expressly declares that none should be disappointed who would accept His gift. "He that cometh unto Me shall never hunger; he that believeth on Me shall never thirst; and him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." By such language He plainly intimates that the gift of that spiritual manna of which He spake was equally free and extensive as that which was rained from heaven in the days of old. To induce all who heard Him to accept and improve His generous offer of such rich spiritual provision, our Saviour adds, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."

Not only those who are deeply sensible of their

sins, but the careless, and lukewarm, and self-righteous, are authoritatively called to repentance as well as to faith in Christ. "I came," says Jesus, "not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance;" that is, those who really were sinners, whether they felt themselves to be so or not. This is the true meaning of the expression, for God calleth all men everywhere to repent. The haughty Pharisees were solemnly summoned to repent and believe by John the Baptist, and Jesus was much displeased because they refused His invitations both to repentance and faith in Himself (Matt. iii. 7; xxi. 28-32). The members of the Church at Laodicea were extremely careless and self-conceited, yet we find that they also were earnestly exhorted to repent and believe in Christ (Rev. iii. 14-20). If all sinners were not under an obligation to believe in Christ, they might indeed be condemned for other sins, but not for their unbelief; and their rejection of the Gift of God could not be charged against them as their greatest sin, as we are assured shall be the case with the finally impenitent (John iii. 16, 20, 36; Mark xvi. 15, 16; Heb. ii. 3; 1 John v. 10, 11).

God not only reveals Christ as the Saviour of the world, and authorises all men to come to Him for salvation, but He uses means, which, by influencing the heart and conscience, are designed to induce compliance with His gracious proposals. He *commands* us to believe in Jesus—"This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John iii. 23). The

same authority that bids us observe the Sabbath of the Lord and speak the truth to our neighbour lays upon us the binding obligation of believing in Christ.

But because love has a more constraining influence than authority, God kindly condescends to *argue* and *expostulate*, and even *beseech* men to be reconciled to Himself. What heart can resist the tender eloquence of Divine love? None, surely, but that which is harder than adamant! Was it possible for Philemon to resist the touching importunities of Paul, when he might have been bold to enjoin him, but for love's sake rather besought him, to show mercy to Onesimus? If either the authority or entreaties of Paul would have sufficed to obtain compassion for the indiscreet servant, will neither the sovereign authority nor marvellous loving-kindness of the Lord induce men to have mercy on their own souls?

But whatever the reception given to the Saviour, it is certain God would not woo men so lovingly, and employ so many means to draw them to Christ, unless they had an undoubted right to come to Him for the salvation of their souls. "He that boasteth himself of a false gift, is like clouds and wind without rain." Far be it from us to ascribe such conduct to that God in all whose testimonies is eternal righteousness (Ps. cxix. 144).

It is true God hath not chosen all men to salvation, but we have no more right on that account to conclude that He is insincere in calling upon all

men to believe, than we have for thinking that He is insincere in calling upon them to observe all the precepts of His law, because He has not given to all men a disposition to obey every commandment.

It is certain that He requires every one of us to walk blamelessly in every part of life, and to yield a perfect obedience to His commandments; and yet it is no less certain that without His sanctifying grace we are utterly unable to yield such obedience. Hence the propriety of the prayer, "Lord, give what thou commandest, and then command what thou wilt." For every instance of obedience to the Divine commands, we owe praise to Him who in His secret counsels determined to bestow upon us that grace without which we would have followed the direction of our own corrupt hearts; but, on the other hand, when we wilfully act in opposition to the rule of duty, it would be blasphemy to say that God never sincerely enjoined upon us those duties we have neglected to perform. Let us apply this reasoning to the doctrines of Divine sovereignty and human responsibility in the matter of salvation. We must not decry His "decrees" any more than His "laws;" but remember that our rule of duty is not the secret but revealed will of God, and that it is impiety to place the one in direct opposition to the other.

It may appear difficult to conceive how a universal offer of salvation can be founded upon an expiation which, in the secret purposes of God, was

to be limited in its application. But why, it may be asked, does God sometimes seem to make promises which He knows will not be accomplished? When He redeemed the Israelites from the land of Egypt, He promised to conduct them to Canaan. "I will bring you up," He said, "unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites" (Exod. iii. 8, 17). Though this promise was not literally fulfilled in the case of those who heard it, still God's purpose was not broken when the greater part of that guilty nation fell in the wilderness. God is wise to know what lies far beyond the limits of human knowledge; He sees a thousand connections and dependencies among things which no created wisdom can trace; and He sees the true relationship and perfect consistency of truths which, to our contracted minds, appear quite antagonistic.

Instead of regarding any of the doctrines of His Word as opposed to the rule of our duty, let us adore that wisdom which glories in ordaining and accomplishing unsearchable things without number. It is an illustrious instance of God's wisdom, that upon a particular expiation He has founded a general invitation to partake of it; and that He has made the general offer of it the means of savingly applying that particular atonement, without either extending it beyond the limits set in His secret counsels, or leaving the least reason of complaint to any to whom the revelation of His grace is ineffectual. "No man," says our Lord, "can



come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him : all that the Father giveth me shall come unto me ; and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

The proper question for a sinner, therefore, is not whether or not I am one of those given by the Father to the Son ; but whether or not I am one of those to whom a crucified Saviour is presented in the Gospel as the object of their hope and confidence. Let us take the true method appointed by God, for making our election sure, by taking the Word of God as the rule of our faith and practice. Knowing that we have a right to believe on Jesus, let us exercise this right by unreservedly entrusting Him with our salvation, and we shall know assuredly our election of God, and our redemption by Christ.

The same ground of faith on which sinners are invited to build their hopes remains for them after they have believed. It is true a work of grace is begun in their souls, and shall be carried on to perfection ; but the ground of their faith still lies without them, in the Word of grace. They have new encouragements to faith which they are bound diligently to improve ; but there is a great difference between marks of faith, or encouragements to faith, and the grounds of faith. Paul ceased not to regard the revelations of Divine grace in the Gospel to the chief of sinners as the ground of his hope, although he by no means neglected to take comfort from the marks of grace which he felt

within himself, as undoubted evidences that his hope would not leave him ashamed (1 Tim. i. 15).

If we were to make anything in ourselves the ground of faith, we should find no solid rest for our souls. The work of grace is always imperfect. It is sometimes in such a languishing state that it can scarcely be discovered; and the best of believers are occasionally surrounded by so many temptations, harassed by so many evils, and conscious of so many imperfections, that they are incapable of discerning the operations of the sanctifying Spirit within them. But the Word of God is an immutable foundation. To say that our faith is founded on the Word of Divine revelation, is to say that it is founded upon unvarying faithfulness, upon untainted holiness, upon almighty power. The Word of God cannot deceive us, for it is the Word of Him who cannot lie, and who being of purer eyes than to behold evil, cannot possibly impose upon His creatures. The heavens and the earth shall pass away, but we are sure that the Word of God shall never pass away. Having, then, this Word as the ground of our confidence, we may trust and not be afraid.

Although it would be wicked as well as unreasonable to cherish any doubt of the truth of God's Word, still, that we might have the more abundant encouragement to believe in Jesus, He has confirmed it by His oath. Abraham could entertain no doubt of the truth of that which had been confirmed by the oath of God. We naturally imagine that if we

had been in his place we could have had no suspicion of the fulfilment of a promise which had received confirmation far beyond what it seemed to need. But the Apostle Paul tells us that the oath was sworn to Abraham, not only for the consolation of the patriarch, but of all who flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them (Heb. vi. 16, 17). God's Word cannot possibly require confirmation; why then is there also His oath? Just that every shadow of excuse for unbelief might be cut off. How shameful to disbelieve the Lord, when, if we may so speak, He descends below Himself, and, as if He were a fallible creature, strengthens His word of promise by a solemn oath, that thereby He may dispel our doubts and fears. In ancient times, for the establishment of His people's faith, God was sometimes pleased to confirm His word by visible signs (Gen. xv. 17; Isa. xxxviii. 22). No signs seem needful now, after the wondrous demonstration which God has given of His love in Christ Jesus (Rom. viii. 32). Still, in His goodness, He is pleased to allow us the signs of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, that we may never call in question the truth of His Word, or the excellency of that grace which it displays.

Thus we see what sure ground is laid for our faith. Sinners have all possible assurances of their free access to Christ, of His sufficiency and willingness to save, of the absolute certainty of everything connected with their salvation. Those who already through grace believe in Jesus, have rich and strong

encouragements to cleave to Him with full purpose of heart. They have the witness in themselves. The Word of God has been tried by them, and by blessed experience they have found that it is no vain thing to trust in the Lord. Although the foundation of their confidence is not firmer than before, yet they have obtained new lights for ascertaining its stability. They have felt the sweet influence of the Word of God in pacifying conscience, sanctifying the soul, fortifying against temptation, and sustaining amid the varied troubles of the present life. Having through the mercy of God obtained such personal, experimental conviction of the truth of God's Word, they ought to increase in faith day by day, and, like Abraham of old, give glory to God by trusting Him implicitly under every possible discouragement.

If our faith bore anything like a just proportion to the stability of its foundation, we might well say with the Psalmist: "In God is my salvation, my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge is in God. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about. Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of my head."

#### MOTIVES AND ENCOURAGEMENTS TO FAITH IN CHRIST.

*First.*—It is certain that we absolutely need a salvation that can only be obtained through Faith in Jesus Christ.

How shall man be just with God, how shall he be pure with his Maker? Can we redeem ourselves

from the sin and misery of our fallen condition? Can the discoveries of philosophers point out any method of deliverance? We are without strength, and philosophy gives no relief; for the world by wisdom knew not God. The law itself, instead of relieving, condemns us. The law is indeed every way worthy of its Divine Giver, but it was never designed to give life to men dead in trespasses and sins; on the contrary, the law meeting with our corrupt nature, rather strengthens than destroys our corruptions. Sin, at least, taking occasion by the commandment, deceives, and thereby slays us. By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, even that righteousness of God which is by the faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all, them that believe. We must therefore seek that righteousness and salvation by exercising faith in Christ, or perish for ever.

If a pardon can be obtained by a condemned criminal only by applying to the sovereign, he must have recourse to royal clemency, or lay aside all hope of escaping the fatal stroke. Benhadad, king of Syria, found himself in a desperate condition. Only one faint ray of hope was left to him. It had been reported that the kings of the house of Israel were merciful kings. He sends, therefore, to implore the mercy of Ahab; because he must either be indebted for life to that deeply-injured prince, or perish. His appeal was not in vain. The king

of Israel suffered him not only to live but to reign.

We have infinitely greater encouragement to trust in the mercy of Christ, and we are under infinitely stronger necessity of having recourse to Him for our salvation.

*Second.—The knowledge of God's love and faithfulness should encourage us to believe in Jesus.*

We have already spoken of the gift which God has made of Christ, and of eternal life in Him, to every hearer of the Gospel. Would it not have been strange conduct on the part of the children of Israel if they had refused to accept God's grant to them of the land of Canaan? Were they not worthy of severe punishment for objecting to go up and take possession of it? (Num. xiv.) Would not the good name of Jephthah have been sullied had he yielded to the unjust claims of the king of the Ammonites, who pretended a right to recover part of that good land from Israel. But Jephthah had a spirit too noble to part with anything that God had given to His people. "Wilt not thou possess," he said, "that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess?" And shall not we possess that which the Lord our God giveth us to possess?

The Lord not only sets before us the gift of righteousness—of life—of Christ Himself—but invites, reasons, commands, yea, beseeches us to accept His precious Gift. Shall our Divine Creator manifest such solicitude in our happiness, and our response

be, "Thy gifts be unto another"? Absalom supposed his servants bound to expose themselves to the just resentment of Joab when he commanded them to set fire to his fields,—“Have not I commanded you,” he said; as if he thought the commandment of a king’s son warranted the commission of any crime, however atrocious.

But we are certain that the express command of God is amply sufficient to answer every objection that may start up in the mind against believing in Christ. If He had only said, “Do this,” we would have been bound instantly to do it; but when He enforces His injunction by so many touching considerations, we show inexcusable stiffness of spirit in prolonging our disobedience from day to day.

The promises of rest, and peace, and life to all that believe in Jesus are “exceeding great and precious.” To live on in unbelief is to pour contempt upon a God of grace, freely promising the choicest blessings He can bestow upon His creatures. All His promises are “yea and amen” in Christ. Although they originate in the sovereign love of God, the mediation of Jesus is the channel through which they flow. To reject them, therefore, is not only to despise the favour of our Heavenly Father, but to trample under foot the blood of His Son our Saviour.

In connection with these promises, God has employed all the wisdom and eloquence of heaven to remove excuses, and to enforce those arguments which, by their own native energy, ought to induce

every hearer of the Gospel to believe in Christ to the saving of his soul.

How shall men escape if they neglect the salvation procured at so great a cost, or impugn the truth of those gracious words which afford so cheering an illustration of the Divine faithfulness?

*Third.*—*The records of Christ's administration afford powerful encouragements to the exercise of faith in His name.*

Think of the life and character of many sinners who have been saved. Not a few of the vilest and guiltiest of the human family—as we learn from the unerring oracles of truth—have been washed, and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Why have such instances of the grace of God, and the efficacy of faith, been recorded in Holy Writ?

Paul informs us in the case of Abraham—"Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him (for righteousness); but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead" (Rom. iv. 23, 24). Paul makes a like observation in regard to the design of God, in his own conversion (1 Tim. i. 17). Let us read with attention not only the writings of the apostles, but those of Old Testament prophets and historians, and we shall find faith recommended as one of the noblest graces of the Christian life. Paul deduces strong arguments and encouragements to believe in



Christ, not only from the history of Abraham, but that of all the elders who obtained a good report. They obtained it, he tells us, by *faith*.

And surely of all kinds of faith, that is the most precious by which we commit our immortal souls to Christ for salvation. Is that faith justly commended by which, in the days of old, men quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, turned to flight the armies of the aliens, stopped the mouths of lions? Still more excellent is that faith by which we receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness; by which we take hold of the strength of Christ, and walk calmly onwards to celestial blessedness; by which, whilst warring a good warfare, we stand firm against all our spiritual enemies, and become more than conquerors through Him that loved us!

Many are discouraged from believing in Christ from an overwhelming sense of guilt. But when viewed in the light of the Gospel, even such painful consciousness supplies a motive to faith. If sin is always hateful to God, and if our iniquities are exceedingly great and heinous, we have the greater need of that deliverance which is only to be found in Christ; and we have abundant assurance that all who believe in Him shall be justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses, and that where sin abounded grace did much more abound (Isa. i. 18; iv. 7; 1 Tim. i. 14).

“Who ever perished,” said Eliphaz, “being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?”

The question implied a grievous mistake in the sense in which it was asked. But we may confidently inquire of those who are weighed down by a sense of their sinfulness, “What humble believer ever perished? what man was ever cut off who placed his entire dependence on Christ for salvation?” Before such a calamity could happen eternal truth must fail, the inspired writers be found false witnesses for Christ, yea, the word and promise of the immutable Jehovah must be broken (Ps. xxxvi. 5, 6).

*Fourth.—The representations made in Scripture of the sin and danger of unbelief should stimulate to the exercise of faith.*

That unbelief was extremely offensive to our blessed Saviour is no less evident than that He took pleasure in those who honoured Him with their confidence.

When He commended the faith of the centurion, He did so in terms that showed His dissatisfaction with the weak and imperfect faith at that time prevailing in the land—“Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”

In other places we find Him ascribing the unbelief of the Jews to its true cause, and describing the severe punishment due to a sin by which He was so much dishonoured—“If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.”

Although He tenderly loved His disciples, and was pleased with the sincerity of their faith, yet we often find Him sharply reproving them for its weakness. When He promised that His Spirit should accompany the ministrations of His disciples, He told them that when He was come He would reprove the world of sin, because they did not believe in Him, a proof of the prominent place which Christ assigned to unbelief in the catalogue of human sins. Frequently, too, in the course of His personal ministry did He inculcate that awakening truth which He commanded His apostles to preach, that all who believed should be saved, and that all who refused to believe should be condemned.

We cannot wonder that a sin so displeasing to God should be uniformly set forth in denunciatory terms. By unbelief men counteract the gracious designs of God for the salvation of sinners; they treat the blood of the covenant as an unholy thing, as if shed in vain. They oppose the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to make them partakers, through faith, of that redemption which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

Thus rejecting the counsel of God against themselves, and pouring contempt on all His revealed perfections which would have been glorified in their salvation, what can be more just than that they should reap the fruit of their own ways, and be filled with their own devices?

God made a grant of the land of Canaan to the children of Israel, but Moses tells us that they could

not enter in because of unbelief. They distrusted God's promise of help, and refused to go up against the sons of Anak. "With whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?" This, we learn from Paul, is designed for our warning, that we fall not after the same example of unbelief. Glad tidings have been brought to us of a promised rest. From us, as from the Jews, faith is required for our entering in. To us, as to them, unbelief will prove fatal! But all that came out of Egypt did not die in the desert. Joshua and Caleb, through faith, followed the Lord fully. Let us be wise, and choose rather to follow the example of these two men, than walk in the way of the unbelieving multitude (Ps. xcv. 6-11; Heb. iii. iv.)

In addition to what is said of unbelief, all that is written in Scripture concerning the evil and danger of any sin, affords powerful motives to faith. If sin be so bad in its own nature, and so dangerous to the sinner, necessity is laid upon us to use the only possible means of deliverance from its power. If a man were pursued by a fierce enemy seeking his life, the instinctive law of self-preservation would urge him to escape to a place of safety. This is our danger—every sin exposes us to the wrath and curse of God. Security and protection are only to be found in Christ, by faith. Not a single sin can be pardoned save through Christ; and the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin.

What, then, though conscience accuseth us of innumerable transgressions, the wisdom which is from above will teach us, for this very reason, to flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us, breathing the prayer, "For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great."

How fearful is the condition of those who continue in unbelief. They are still in a state of sin and misery. They are treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, by adding daily to their iniquities. Condemned already,—unless their state is changed before the judgment of the great day, their eternal portion shall be with those angels who kept not their first habitation. But, unlike them, these malignant spirits never rejected a salvation, revealed and urged upon their acceptance. As the angels in heaven are unable to sing that charming note in the song of the redeemed from among men, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood,"—so devils will not be condemned for neglecting the great salvation which at the first was spoken by the Lord Himself, and was afterwards confirmed by them that heard Him.

*Fifth.—Every argument that can enforce any duty of the Christian life, enforces also the duty of believing on the Son of God ; for, apart from this, it is impossible to perform any duty in a manner acceptable to God.*

What profit is there in a servant who performs no part of his work in a manner advantageous or

pleasing to his master? Such an one will receive no thanks, and might as well spare his labour! Equally profitless shall be our religious services if performed in a way displeasing to God. Without faith it is impossible to please Him. "We labour," says the Apostle Paul, "that whether present or absent we may be accepted of Him." Without such a prospect of acceptance, his hands would have been palsied in the good work of the Lord. And there cannot be a comfortable persuasion of Divine acceptance without faith in Christ, for we come unto God by Him (Heb. vii. 25). Through Him we believe in God (1 Pet. i. 21). We offer our spiritual sacrifices which are acceptable to God, only by Jesus Christ (1 Pet. ii. 5). Besides, "we are not sufficient to do anything of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God," and it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell in Christ for us. Since we can do nothing spiritually good without Christ, we must by faith carry on a constant intercourse with Him, receiving out of His fulness and grace for grace, that we may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works (John xv. 1-5; Col. ii. 6, 7).

No duty is more universally binding than that of prayer. The true disciple delights in the exercises of devotion; he would not neglect them for a single day; much less can he neglect the duty of believing in Christ, in whose name alone we can acceptably present our requests, and for whose sake we expect an answer. Unless offered in faith, our prayers are worthless; it is only when asked for believingly

that the blessing is obtained (John xiv. 14; Jas. i. 6). It would be easy to show that faith in Christ is equally necessary for our profitable meditation on spiritual subjects, for our sorrowing for sin after a godly sort, for our praising God with the melody of the heart, for our waiting with advantage on Divine ordinances; and, therefore, when urged by conscience to the performance of any other duty, we should feel that this duty comes first, and that God will be glorified by our intelligent faith in Christ (Rom. iv. 18, 19; 1 John v. 10).

#### OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

*First.*—Some men call in question the value of faith. Being ignorant of their inherent weakness and depravity, they suppose they have no need to rely on Christ alone for salvation, as their own righteousness and good resolutions must, to a certain extent at least, screen them from the wrath of God.

The Epistle to the Galatians supplies abundant answers to this objection. It teaches us that to look in any degree to the law for justification is to renounce all hope of salvation through Christ; because if righteousness can come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain (Gal. ii. 20-25).

In order to be fully convinced of the necessity of faith in Christ, we ought often and seriously to consider the terrible majesty, the unspotted holiness, the immutable righteousness of God,—the price

required for the satisfaction of Divine justice in the redemption of sinners,—the hateful character of sin,—the worthlessness of our best services, and the utter insufficiency of all of them put together to compensate for the least of our iniquities,—the indignity done to Christ by those who would divide the glory of salvation between Him and themselves,—the complete opposition stated in Scripture between the law of faith and the law of works, and the place assigned to human holiness in the covenant of grace. That we are not justified by the works of the law is manifest, for the just shall live by faith; but the law is not of faith, but the man that doeth them shall live in them. What, then, remains for us but to seek life in the way wherein Paul and the ancient believers sought it (Gal. ii. 15-20; Phil. iii. 8-11; Acts xv. 10).

*Second.*—Some men, being deeply convinced of sin, are tempted to say, "There is no succour for us in Christ; our sins are so exceptionally heinous as to place us beyond the hope of forgiveness.

The Bible furnishes a satisfactory answer to this objection. It reminds us that the blood of Christ is the blood of the Son of God, that the design of God in the scheme of human redemption is to show forth the exceeding riches of His grace; that His mercy abounds far above the greatest offences of men; that all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men except the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost; that many of the Gospel invitations are addressed to the



worst of sinners, and every possible assurance is given that their application to Christ shall not be rejected; that as a matter of fact many notoriously wicked men have been forgiven and made monuments of mercy, for the encouragement of similar transgressors to believe on Christ for everlasting life.

*Third.*—Others say, that being anxious to obtain salvation, they have tried, but tried in vain, to believe in Christ, and commit their eternal interests into His hands. They have little or no experience of the victories of faith or the joys of religion, and therefore they conclude that their trust in Christ is a delusion, and that all future attempts to believe will issue in like disappointment. This objection may be urged by a dejected believer, or by one who, while thinking he believes, is deceiving himself, and therefore it is very needful that persons whose minds are perplexed by it, should impartially examine themselves by the standard of God's Word, whether or not they are in the faith.

On the one hand, we must not conclude that we are real believers because we have felt some motions of the heart towards Christ. The stony-ground hearers believed the Word for a time, but brought forth no fruit to perfection. On the other hand, men must not suppose that they are in a state of unbelief because there is a law in their members warring against the law of their minds, or because they have not yet tasted all those holy pleasures which other men have obtained through faith.

If, as the result of self-scrutiny, we discover that we are not true believers, it is high time to make ourselves acquainted with the real nature of faith, and pray God that we may henceforth be preserved from error on a point so exceedingly important. If we find that amid much remaining corruption there is some good thing in us toward the Lord God of Israel, let us call to mind the firm foundation on which faith rests, and implore that grace which alone can relieve our perplexities and enable us anew to place all our dependence on Christ for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

*Fourth.*—Erroneous views of the doctrine of Divine sovereignty have given rise to a specious objection. It is sometimes asked, How can we be expected to believe in Christ when we are so often told that Divine grace is absolutely necessary to enable us to do so?

It must be acknowledged that no man can come unto Christ by faith unless it be given him by God. But it admits of as little doubt that when God says to men, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead," He is so far from mocking their misery, that He appears in the full glory of His grace, manifesting His marvellous love to perishing sinners. His ways are not as man's ways, nor His thoughts as man's thoughts; neither are His calls and invitations like those which men address to each other.

No sane man would think of commanding the sick to be well, or the dead to come forth out of their

graves; but why should we compare feeble mortals with the mighty God? Let us rather compare God with Himself, and form our judgment of one part of His conduct by what we know of another. When our Divine Saviour dwelt on earth He often commanded the diseased and infirm to be made whole. Did they think that He mocked them when He bade them stretch forth the withered arm, or arise from the bed of weakness and walk? Nay; they had faith in His power and goodness, and, filled with grateful joy, they found health and vigour in the very act of obedience. Sometimes, too, Jesus spake to the dead, and life at once returned to the inanimate frame. What Christ did upon the bodies of men was just a visible illustration of the effectual working of His power upon their souls. "The hour cometh," He says, "and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God," and they that hear shall live.

We know that the Spirit of God works upon whom and in what manner, at what time and by what means, He pleases. The unregenerate man can neither convert himself nor prepare himself for conversion, but he can remove himself to a greater distance from it by the indulgence of vicious inclinations, or by the voluntary surrender of his faculties to a spirit of sloth or despondency. We place ourselves in the way where the Divine Spirit is accustomed to come, and where we are most likely to feel His gracious influence, when in the closet or the sanctuary we meditate on God's Word, and seek

diligently to improve the means of grace. The Spirit works in us both to will and to do. We deceive ourselves if we suppose that the will is in us, whilst we make no attempts to do; and if He works in us really to will, He will also work in us to do, of His good pleasure. This we know—it is no vain thing, but our life, to respond to His gracious call, and bring our hearts under the sanctifying influence of the truth.

The four lepers of Samaria, who were ready to perish with hunger, went out to the camp of the Syrians. It seemed extremely unlikely that these cruel enemies of Israel would suffer the famished men to live. But what could they do? They were sure to die if they continued in the city; they could but die if the Syrians refused to show them mercy. They took, therefore, the wisest course, though it seemed a desperate step, when they said one to another, "Why sit we here until we die? Let us go unto the host of the Syrians." How much more should those who are called by the Gospel to believe strive to enter in at the strait gate. Let them consider what must be their doom if they obtain not that salvation which is in Christ. If they are not found in Him they must perish; for there is no other sacrifice for sin. If their efforts to lay hold on eternal life, through faith in His name, are unsuccessful, they can but perish! But, blessed be God, such a catastrophe can never happen. "None perish that him trust." His words are, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

## PRACTICAL DIRECTIONS.

*First.—Let us labour to be well acquainted with the true nature of saving faith, that we may not substitute a dangerous counterfeit for that grace so essential to the Christian life, and so powerfully commended in the Word of God.*

For this end, let us look carefully into the real import of the word, and the testimony on which it is built; for our faith must correspond with the truths we believe. It is a firm persuasion of the truth of the doctrine concerning Christ revealed in Scripture, resting on God's faithfulness to His promise, and the sincerity of that grant which is made to us of eternal life in Christ (Heb. xi. 1-3).

It will be proper also to consider the import of those figurative expressions by which faith is frequently set forth in Holy Scripture. It is represented as the soul's "coming to Christ" (Matt. xi. 28); as "receiving" Christ (Col. ii. 6); "building" upon Christ (Eph. ii. 20); "putting on" Christ (Gal. iii. 17); laying hold of Christ (Heb. vi. 18); eating His flesh and drinking His blood (John vi. 55); looking to Christ (Heb. xii. 2); a committing of the soul to Christ (2 Tim. i. 12). Some of these images have called forth the sarcasm of graceless writers, but they are full of light and sweetness to those who have senses exercised to discern good and evil.

It will likewise be profitable to study the account

given us of the faith of those holy men who lived in former times. If we have the same spirit of faith, we shall, to a certain extent resemble, though we may not equal, them in that noble attainment (Rom. iv. 23-25 ; Heb. xi.) As the tree is known by its fruits, a knowledge of their practical influence will enable us, in some measure, to distinguish the spurious faith of the formalist from that genuine faith which animates the soul with love to God, and manifests its power in the fruits of holiness (Gal. v. 6).


*Secondly.—Let us inquire if personally we have become partakers of the precious faith of God's elect.*

Inseparably connected, not only with our everlasting welfare, but with every part of Christian practice, the doctrine of faith ought never to be considered without application to ourselves. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith ; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates" (2 Cor. xiii. 5). There are many who lose much of the comfort of faith, because they cannot tell whether or no they are really believing in Jesus. There are some who deceive themselves by mistaking a false, dead faith for that true, living faith which is wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit. Let us ask, therefore, if Jesus Christ be the object of our faith, and if it be exercised about Him in a way suited to His gracious character, as an Almighty Saviour sent by His Father to save us, not only from the penalty, but the power of sin. To believe in Him only as a Saviour from the fearful consequences of sin is to

mistake His character and work as grossly as was done by those carnal Jews, who would have gladly received Him on their own terms to deliver them from the Roman yoke, and feed them with miraculous supplies of bread; but who went away and walked no more with Him, when He asked from them a faith corresponding to those spiritual designs of His mission which He unfolded in their hearing (John vi.)

Have we any of the marks of faith? If really believers we shall have the "witness" in ourselves (1 John v. 10). We shall be sanctified in part, and through our fellowship with Christ shall bring forth some of those fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the glory of God. The Apostle James devotes a part of his epistle to an exposure of the inconsistency of those who lay claim to the possession of faith, when they can produce no good works in proof of its genuineness and power. The Apostle John also frequently insists on the necessity of faith manifesting itself by godly works.

We are not to imagine that we are destitute of faith because we are not yet completely sanctified. When we are perfectly holy faith will be at an end. But there will always be an amount of holiness corresponding to the measure of our faith. In obeying the truth through the Spirit we purify our souls unto an unfeigned love of God and the brethren, and ought to abound more and more in the fruits of love, that the grace bestowed on us may become more apparent. By adding to our faith virtue, and all the other graces of the Spirit, we become neither barren nor



unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and so an abundant entrance into His everlasting kingdom shall be ministered unto us (1 Pet. i. 22 ; 2 Pet. i. 8).

*Third.—If we have not yet believed in Christ, it is high time for us to flee from the wrath to come.*

To-day, if we will hear the voice of God, we must lay hold on eternal life. "Now is the accepted time," and we know not how long it may continue. This night our souls may be required of us, and there is no work nor device in the grave. Just dissuaded from self-murder, the Philippian jailor seemed as incapable as most men of doing anything truly good ; yet he believed in Christ, and at once tasted the joys of salvation. The murderers of our Lord were in a very bad way when Peter and the other apostles preached to them the glad tidings of salvation through Him, whom a few weeks before, they had treated as a malefactor ; and yet they believed and received the gift of the Holy Ghost. David swore unto the Lord, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob, that he would not go into the tabernacle of His house, nor rest in his bed, nor give sleep to his eyes, nor slumber to his eyelids, till he had found a house for the Lord ! Did he account the finding of a habitation for the Lord a matter of so much moment that it admitted of no delay ? How great must be our infatuation if, through sloth or selfishness, we postpone for a single night or hour the duty of finding for Jesus a dwelling in our hearts. He stands at the door and knocks. Let



us remember how short and uncertain human life is, and not for a single instant shut Him from our souls through unbelief.

No doubt our evil hearts will offer great opposition to this needful duty of believing; but let us bear in mind, we are not called to perform it by any strength inherent in ourselves. Abraham and other believers in ancient times experienced similar difficulties, both in the beginning and progress of their faith; but they judged Him faithful who had promised. The grace of God is as rich and free as in the days of old, and He still delights in glorifying it (Eph. ii. 6-8). Think of the irreparable loss already sustained by millions of the human family because they refused to believe in Jesus, or because they trifled away their precious hours in perplexing doubts or half-formed resolutions. Think of the mercy and power of our compassionate Redeemer, and of the commission He received of the Father in favour of miserable sinners, and let us build all our confidence on that foundation which God hath laid in Zion—"It is a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste."

*Fourth.*—"Let us hold fast our faith in Christ, and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Heb. iii. 5).

Trials of faith are necessary and useful; and God, who manages all things for the best interests of His people, will take care that they shall not be wanting (Jas. i. 2; 1 Pet. i. 6). No one need

expect to live long without having his faith severely tried and assaulted. Satan is an irreconcilable enemy of faith, for he knows it to be destructive to the interests of his kingdom in the world. When he sought to have Simon that he might sift him as wheat, it was his intention if possible to destroy his faith. The faith of the good man could not have endured the trial had not Jesus prayed for him that it might not fail.

The world is unfavourable to faith,—worldly prosperity and adversity being equally unfriendly to it. Pleasant things are too apt to draw away our thoughts and desires from the Rock of our salvation. Disagreeable events often tend to shake our confidence in Him who hath promised that no evil shall happen to the just.

The flesh is a foe of faith. The corruptions within us which war against the soul, the carnal appetites and inclinations which wound the conscience, all tend to weaken that faith by which we stand. The maintenance of our faith amid so many trials and assaults depends, not upon our own powers, but upon the grace of our Divine Redeemer; but to receive from Him needful supplies of strength we must be diligent in the use of those means which His wisdom has prescribed. He told Peter that He had prayed for him that his faith might not fail; but He at the same time directed him and the other disciples “to watch and pray that they might not enter into temptation.”

With a view of maintaining a vigorous faith we

ought to cultivate just apprehensions of the administration of Divine Providence. Job's friends were good and wise men, but the unscriptural doctrine they taught in regard to the providence of God would have staggered the faith even of that holy man, if his own views had not been exceptionally steady and clear. The providence of God often seems to run counter to His promises, but the steadfast believer knows that when "clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne" (Ps. xcvi. 2.)

Experience is confirmatory of faith. It is therefore useful for believers to retain in their minds what God has done for them in former times (Deut. viii. 3). They may also get great benefit by considering the experiences of saints who continued steadfast in the faith amidst greater trials and discouragements than their own (Ps. lxxvii.)

We ought frequently to call to remembrance the promises which have been given for the security of our faith, as well as the inviolable faithfulness of the promiser (Heb. x. 23).

That our faith may be firm, we should accustom ourselves to look not at the things which are seen and temporal, but at the things which are unseen and eternal (2 Cor. iv. 18). The false glitter of earthly objects is apt to draw away our hearts from a better world. Just notions of the vanity of those things which the world admires will preserve us from many vain and unworthy thoughts which cannot be cherished with-

out impairing our faith. We could never, for example, have supposed that God had forgotten His promises to His people when we see them destitute, afflicted, and tormented, if we had not formed too high conceptions of the value of those temporal blessings which are often granted to the worthless, and withheld from the best of men.

With all other means, we can only maintain our faith unmoved by fervent and persevering prayer to God for His preserving grace. We are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. If we trust to ourselves, we shall certainly fall before the tempter; but if we trust in Christ for the establishment of our faith, we shall rise and stand upright amid a thousand enemies and dangers (2 Cor. xii. 9, 10).

*Fifth.—We should endeavour to grow in faith, as well as in every other Christian grace.*

Though our faith were vigorous as that of Abraham, it would still be capable of increase. But the majority of Christians have too much reason to acknowledge that their faith falls far short of that of the eminent men who obtained a good report in ancient times. It is very improbable that ours shall ever equal the faith of Abraham or David or Paul, still it is our duty to aspire after such faith. Nor shall our efforts be altogether in vain in the Lord,—for although we never attain to their measure of grace, yet the more earnestly we follow their example, we shall enjoy in richer abundance the consolations of faith and the joys of God's salvation.

That we may be convinced of the necessity of growing in this grace, we should be duly alive to the present weakness of our faith. Of this we have many sad proofs. For example, how apt are we to sink in the day of adversity, and to listen willingly to the voice of unbelief, or of Satan, whispering that there is no succour for us—even in God. How often do we reveal the alienation of our hearts from the faith of the Gospel by the easy admission of sentiments and feelings inconsistent with the glory of Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour. This was one of the special infirmities of the churches of Galatia, and is still a snare even to real believers. How often do we feel strangely disinclined to the more difficult duties of religion, as if there were no strength in Christ to enable us to perform them. How often do slight dangers appal and dispose us despondingly to say, "We shall certainly perish one day by the hands of our enemies;" though we have Christ's own assurance, that His sheep shall never perish, and that no power in earth or hell shall be able to pluck them out of His hand! How often, too, do we feel our souls dragged down to earth by the cares of life, the deceitfulness of riches, and all those varied desires, anxieties, and fears which agitate the minds of men who know not God. It is true some of these symptoms of a feeble faith appear in the experience of vigorous believers,—still, even in their case, they are evidences of temporary weakness, and should call forth the prayer, "Lord, increase our faith."

All the directions given for the establishment of faith might be repeated for the strengthening of it. But the following hints may suffice. That we may grow in faith, let us labour to increase in the knowledge of Christ. Our souls are invigorated by the clear and intelligent contemplation of His character, and of those important truths in which His character is displayed. We must see the Son that we may believe in Him; and the clearer our vision, the deeper shall be our conviction of the sin and folly of unbelief.

The truths of the Gospel are the nourishment of faith, and that we may abound in it more and more, we must study and appropriate all the promises and encouragements given us in the Word of God (Ps. cxix. 98, 99).

The institutions of Divine grace are designed for the strengthening of faith, and must be improved for this end. God hath given to the Church pastors and teachers, for the work of the ministry, till we all come, in the unity of the faith, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ (Eph. iv. 13).

*Sixth.*—*We must endeavour to live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave Himself for us.*

In this world Christians walk by faith, and not by sight; in the next world they shall walk by sight, and not by faith. "The just shall live by his faith," said Habakkuk. Paul makes great use of this statement of the prophet; he proves from it, in his Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, that we must

seek justification by faith without the works of the law; and in his epistle to the Hebrews he proves that if we would endure unto the end, we must encounter all the trials of life in the spirit of faith (Rom. i. 17; Gal. iii. 11; Heb. x. 38).

How can the Christian live except by faith? Whilst in this world we are absent from the Lord, and yet the Lord is our life and our strength and our salvation. By faith we rejoice in an unseen Saviour. By faith He dwells in our hearts. By faith we receive out of His fulness. By faith in Christ we do everything, in a manner at once acceptable to God and useful to ourselves. We are to live by faith upon Christ as our righteousness, and to derive from His atonement, intercession, and grace all those joys and consolations which arise from pardon of sin and reconciliation with God.

We are to live by faith in Christ for our sanctification. He died not only to deliver us from the condemnation due to our sins, but also from the power of iniquity; and therefore, when engaged in spiritual conflicts with the world, the devil, and the flesh, we must draw strength and courage from the cross of Christ. There the victory has been already gained for us, in the person of our Redeemer. He has already subdued all our iniquities, He has finished transgressions and made an end of sin. Our sin was condemned in His flesh, and it is at present under an irreversible sentence of destruction. Nor are we left to execute the sentence as we are able; He who once died to subvert the foundations

of the empire of sin, still lives and reigns to accomplish the designs of His death.

We ought to live by faith in Christ for the communication of heavenly influence to nourish and improve all our spiritual graces. The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. In these holy qualities we are called to abound to the honour of our profession, to the comfort of our own souls, and to the glory of God. But how shall we abound in them? All hope of success in the use of the appointed means lies in Christ our life. It hath pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell, and out of His fulness we receive grace for grace. Of every grace that was in Christ, the ancient believers received a portion according to this measure; and He is still the channel through which God conveys grace into the hearts of men; for by Him the whole body of Christians, being knit together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, maketh increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part.

Blessed is the man whose strength is in the Lord Jesus! when he is weak then is he strong. How wonderful were the exploits which Paul achieved by the strength of Christ (Rom. xv. 19). We are not called to such arduous work, yet the meanest Christian is called to services of great moment to himself, and of no small importance to the Church of Christ; but he is called to no service without correspondent promises of help from Christ.



Whatever we do, therefore, in word or deed, let it be done in the name of the Lord Jesus. We must pray in His name,—we must render thanks to God through Him, and for His sake must expect the acceptance of everything we do in the service of the Lord. To suppose that God will be pleased with anything we do on any other ground than that of Christ's mediation would be no less presumptuous than it would have been for an ancient Israelite to have presented to God his own sacrifices, instead of putting them into the hands of the priests who were consecrated to bear the iniquity of holy things (1 Pet. ii. 5).

We ought to live by faith in Christ, amidst the conflicts and trials of life. We are called to fight the Lord's battles against the devil and the world, as well as against the corruptions of our own hearts; and as David went forth against Goliath in the name of the living God, we must be strong in the Lord Jesus and in the power of His might, that we may stand firm against all the powers of darkness seeking our overthrow (Eph. vi. 12). The prince of this world is already judged. We are to fight against him as a foe already effectually subdued by our great Leader, and in the assured hope that the God of peace will bruise him under our feet shortly. Paul, buffeted by Satan, prayed to Christ, and trusting in Him, out of weakness he was made strong (2 Cor. xii. 9).

The world also is a dangerous enemy. We are too easily frightened from duty by its frowns, or seduced by its smiles, or corrupted by its ensnaring

example. But Christ gave Himself for us, to deliver us from this present evil world. In His life and death we see how little regard Jesus paid either to the great or evil things of the present life. The contemplation of His glory will change us into the same image. Who had greater reason than the Apostle Paul to complain of a hard conflict with the world,—but he lived by faith of the Son of God, and could say, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom I am crucified unto the world, and the world is crucified unto me.” Hence the world had no terrors for him. He was not afraid to go to Jerusalem, the dwelling-place of his most malignant adversaries,—he was not afraid to go to Rome and appear before Cæsar,—he was not afraid to advance alone into any of the great centres of population, though warned beforehand that in every city bonds and afflictions awaited him. He trusted in the Lord, and knew that he would be delivered from every evil work, and preserved safe unto God’s heavenly kingdom.

Amongst the sorest afflictions of Christians are those which are embittered by a consciousness of guilt and shortcoming. It is a sign of great hardness of heart not to be overcome with grief when God testifies His displeasure against us; but even at such times we must not cast away our confidence in a merciful Redeemer, who can have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way. David out of the depths cried unto God; he confessed that if the

Lord should mark iniquity, neither he nor any of the human race could stand; but he reflected that that there was forgiveness with God, and so he waited for the Lord, and exhorted every Israelite to hope in the Lord, because with Him there is mercy, and with Him there is plenteous redemption.

Spiritual distress occasioned by a sense of guilt, or the prevalence of sin, or the force of sore temptation, is sometimes almost insupportable. Where, in such a case, is our help to be found? Only in Him who Himself suffered, being tempted, and is ever able to succour them that are tempted. David was greatly cast down through guilt resting on his conscience, but he was well assured that the application of atoning blood, typified by that of the legal sacrifices, would make him whiter than the snow, and would make the bones which sin had broken to rejoice. The one oblation of Christ for ever perfects all them that are sanctified. Resting on His finished work, Jesus becomes their Advocate, their Prince, their Shepherd, their Guide to the land of uprightness. He will heal all their diseases. He will bind up their painful wounds. He will make them as if they had never sinned, and will take occasion from their very unworthiness and wretchedness to display the riches of His grace (1 John i. 7-9; ii. 1; Ps. lxxxvi. 5, 6).

We ought to live by faith in Christ amid public calamities befalling the nation or church to which we belong. We are assured that Christ is

King of kings and Lord of lords; that He has been made Head over all things to the Church, which is His body; and that He knows how to make the most disastrous events subservient to His gracious purposes. We ought, therefore, while deploring the evils of our times, to rejoice in the administration of Christ, and to believe that, through His wise and gracious management, light shall spring out of darkness, and the wrath of man be made to praise Him (Luke xxi. 28). When the Church of God was carried captive to Babylon, the hearts of her pious members sank almost into despair. They wept when they remembered Zion, and hung their harps upon the willows; but what was the counsel given them by the prophet Habakkuk in view of that calamitous event? "The just," said he, "shall live by his faith." And Paul repeats the sentiment to the believing Hebrews, in the prospect of the crushing judgments that were soon to come upon their nation and country (Heb. x.)

Even in death we ought to live by faith in Christ, as the atoning High Priest by whose sacrifice we are delivered from sin, which is the sting of death; and as the Prince of Life, who has in His hands the keys of death and the invisible world; who opens, and no man shuts; who sends His angels to conduct the souls of His people to the place where He dwells; and who, by His glorious power, shall raise them up at the last day, and cause them to sit for ever with Himself

upon His throne. By faith in our dying moments, survivors may be greatly benefited through the testimony thus borne to the power of the Gospel; and we shall have the pleasing consciousness of having improved the very latest opportunity of glorifying God amongst the inhabitants of a world which, though so full of His goodness, is very empty of His praise (John xi. 15, 26; 1 Cor. xv. 55-57).

Blessed and holy are those who live from day to day by the faith of the Son of God. They are happy in life and in death. They are strong and able to do exploits. No enemy shall ever prevail against them. No disaster shall ever overthrow them. For them to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

*Seventh.—Let us demonstrate the genuineness of our faith by "being fruitful in every good work."*

If we really believe in Christ, and hope for His salvation, we ought to rejoice greatly in the Lord, and manifest our happiness by contentment with our condition in life, by cheerfulness under worldly reverses, by a disposition on all occasions to praise the Lord, who hath already blessed us, and from whose favour we hope to receive blessings that shall make us equal to the angels in heaven. "Why art thou, being the king's son, sad from day to day?" said Jonadab to Ammon. That prince might have answered: "Why should not the king's son be sad when he feels the bitterness of adversity, and the tyranny of wicked passions as acutely as other men?" But believers are, in many respects, superior to their fellow-men. They are, indeed, exposed with their


brethren of the human family to the varied evils of life, and frequently to a greater share of them than their neighbours; but they have this inner source of satisfaction, that in the end they shall obtain the salvation which is in Christ, with eternal glory. And they know that all the sufferings of the present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in them. Why, then, should their souls be cast down, or why should they be disquieted within them? Should they not still hope in God, in the full confidence that they shall yet praise Him as the health of their countenance and their God? Can they forget that their present troubles, instead of obstructing the completion of their hopes, are just tending to the furtherance of their salvation, through the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ? The soul is infinitely more precious than the body, and there is greater reason for joy than sorrow in the most painful of these trials, which are really working together for one's spiritual advantage. At the very time, therefore, when they are in heaviness through manifold temptations, Christians have reason to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Believing in Jesus, let us testify the strength of our faith by showing a noble superiority to the present world, and living as citizens of heaven. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Can we place our happiness in any earthly object when we know that we have an inalienable title to that inheritance which is incor-

ruptible, undefiled, and unfading? Can we believe that Jesus would purchase heaven for us by His precious blood, and yet suffer us to want any accommodation that is really needful by the way? Who gave Himself, what gift will He deny?

If we believe in Christ, we ought to hate sin, and flee from every form of temptation. None have such clear views of the evil of sin as believers. They know at what cost their redemption from it has been secured, and they know that they have been redeemed that they may serve God in righteousness and holiness continually. How can they who know and believe that they are dead to sin, by their fellowship with Christ, live any longer therein? (Zech. xii. 10). If we believe in Christ for salvation, we ought to walk as He also walked (1 John ii. 6). Let us be followers of God as dear children, walking in all lowliness and meekness and long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us (Tit. iii. 3-8).

Renouncing our own works, and sensible that we must be accepted before God, on the ground of a better righteousness than our own, we ought to act as pardoned criminals, who, but for the interposition of infinite mercy, must have been for ever associated with devils, amid the horrors of their infernal prison-house (Eph. ii. 8, 9). Forgiven much, we should love much. Deeply impressed with a sense of the danger we have escaped, we should be earnestly active in seeking to bring others to share in our happy deliverance. Are we animated by the spirit



of faith? Then it will be our heart's desire and prayer that the number of our fellow-believers be multiplied a thousandfold! This was the disposition of the apostles—that which they saw and heard they declared, that others also might have fellowship with them. This was the disposition of the holy forerunner of our Lord. When his disciples envied for his sake the popularity of Jesus, alleging that all men were following him, John just expressed regret that so few believed in him—"What he hath seen and heard he testifieth, and no man receiveth his testimony" (John iii. 32). With similar zeal let us endeavour to bring those under our care, and all others whom our influence may reach, to a saving acquaintance with Christ, by instructing them in those blessed truths which are the seed and nourishment of faith (Ps. lxxviii. 1-8).

By abounding in those holy works which are the proper fruits of faith, our example may prove the means of winning relations and neighbours to the knowledge and service of Christ (1 Cor. vii. 15; 1 Pet. iii. 1, 2).

Let us show all due respect to those holy institutions which are so often blessed by God for the conversion of sinners. Let us strive to maintain them in their purity, and extend their influence throughout all the world. We are greatly indebted to those good men who in early times preached the Gospel in this land, and introduced the ordinances of religion. How ungrateful shall we be to God, and to our ancestors, if the means of



faith, through our indolence or neglect, should be transmitted less purely to our posterity (Exod. xx. 24). Let it be our earnest desire not only to hold fast, but to hold forth the truth; especially let us be active, in defending and disseminating those cardinal doctrines bearing on the person and offices of Christ, the way of salvation through faith in His name, and the right which all sinners have to come to Him for salvation. In the Epistle to the Galatians we find how zealous Paul was in propagating these truths, and with what fervour of spirit he warned men against the seductions of false teachers, who, by subverting the Gospel of Christ, subverted also the souls of men. All the apostles were animated by the same sacred fervour (Acts xv.) Let us work and pray like them. God giveth the increase. That His Word may have free course amongst ourselves and throughout the world; that Christ may be glorified and sinners saved,—let this be our supplication, “God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations” (Ps. lxvii. 1, 2).

We have spoken largely of the knowledge of Christ, and of faith in His name. There are many other duties we owe Him, concerning which the Scripture furnishes us with abundant materials of discourse. It will be necessary in this place to say something of the chief of them. It is true that those who know and trust Him will never think they can do enough to please Him. But we

ought to search the Scriptures that we may know what instances of our regard He expects and will accept at our hands (John xv. 14; Rom. vi.)

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### III.—LOVE TO CHRIST.

“If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.”—1 CORINTHIANS xvi. 22.

“He is altogether lovely.” Christ loved us when we were altogether unlovely and vile. The love of God, like Himself, is underived and independent, but we cannot love unless there are amiable qualities to attract our esteem. In our Saviour there are such transcendent excellencies that the moment they are seen by faith we are constrained to exclaim, “How great is His goodness, how great is His beauty.” The divine nature of Christ is the ground of our love; His person, as God-man, is the object of it. As a man, grace and truth shone forth in every part of His character, and there was in Him everything fitted to endear Him to our hearts.

His love to righteousness and hatred of iniquity, the depth of His compassion and forbearance, His zeal for the Father’s glory were so wonderful, that those must be blind indeed who see not in His person and work a beauty and excellency fitted to fill the soul with gratitude, love, and praise.


Christ puts a high value upon our love.

What can this love be to Him who inhabits the praises of eternity? Yet, as if our hearts were

worthy of His acceptance, He asks and accepts of them as a most precious oblation. "O daughter, hearken and consider, forget also thy father's house and thine own people, so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty." "How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse, how much better is thy love than wine, and the smell of thine ointments than all spices."

If our love were worth anything to Christ, what merit could we claim from it? Is it not richly deserved? has He not bought it with a price of inconceivable value? Yet, as if He had done nothing to constrain us to love Him, He is pleased to express satisfaction with every token of our regard, and would reckon Himself unrighteous if He should forget any of our labours of love, or ministrations to the meanest of His people. Those who do the will of His father in heaven are His mothers, His sisters and brothers, and a cup of cold water given in His name shall in no wise lose its reward.

If our love, in all its workings and fruits, is so well-pleasing to Christ, why should He not have it all? Why should we pervert the warm affections of our souls, by suffering them to run waste upon vanities and lies? Let Him, who so well deserves it, who has done and endured so much to gain it, who sets so high a price upon it—be its great object. Let us love Him above all earthly enjoyments, above all relatives and friends. The chief place in our hearts is due to Christ, our love to Him must be pure and entire. Saith Christ, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy



of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Jas. iv. 4; Ps. xlv. 10).

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#### IV.—PRAISE TO CHRIST.

"Prayer also shall be made for him continually; and daily shall he be praised."—PSALM lxxii. 15.

"Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people."  
—ROMANS xv. 11.

If we praise God who created us, we ought also to render thanks to Christ, by whom we have been redeemed, and through whose grace existence has been made not a curse to us, but the basis of the richest blessings (John i. 4; 1 Pet. iii. 18). If we praise God for the wonderful things He has done to us and our fathers, ought we not to render thanks also to Him through whom God's works of goodness and mercy are accomplished? He was the Angel of Jehovah's presence, who saved His ancient people. He is God's salvation to the ends of the earth; and into His hands is all judgment committed, that men might honour the Son even as they honour the Father (John v. 23).

The reasons for rendering thanks to Christ are so powerful, that if we should be silent in His praise, the very stones might cry out, and upbraid our ingratitude (Luke xix. 40).

The angels in heaven are represented as joining with the living creatures and the elders and the vast company of the redeemed in adoring praise of the "Lamb that was slain" (Rev. v. 9-12).

We hope to form part of that glorious assembly. Already we are admitted to such fellowship with the worshippers in the upper sanctuary as our present state will admit of (Heb. xii. 23), and therefore we ought, as far as our present weakness will allow, to join in their work. Blessed are they who dwell with Christ in His Father's house; they are ever praising Him. But those also are blessed who are travelling in the way that leads to it. They are already in heavenly places in Christ, and have constant reason to show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into marvellous light. Each one, conscious of this blessed change in his condition, cannot surely refrain from saying with the beloved disciple, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father: to him be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

John in vision saw not only saints and angels, but all creatures in heaven and earth, and under the earth, ascribing praise to Christ; and we find Isaiah calling upon the mountains and vales, the forests and all their trees, and heaven with all its hosts, to celebrate the praises of Him who hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel. If inanimate objects had tongues they would certainly use them in praising Him by whom they were made, and by whom the creature itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and made to share in the glorious liberty of the children of God. Why should

men who, above all creatures, are interested in Christ, and who, through His redeeming work, have been favoured with such fresh views of their Creator's glory, be less forward to praise Him? Surely the wisdom, the power, the righteousness, the faithfulness, the wondrous love of their Divine Redeemer, supply the saints with an exhaustless theme of praise. Every office He executes, every suffering He endured, every gracious work He has performed, every promise He has given, every assurance of His love, every triumph of His grace, demands most grateful thanksgiving. That we may praise Him as we ought it is necessary for us to know Him. If we have clear apprehensions of His character and work, we shall not be able to restrain our lips from uttering His praise. But we should earnestly seek to know Him better, that we may praise Him with greater intelligence and delight, and our thanksgivings be less unworthy of their glorious subject.

If our hearts are properly impressed with a sense of the glory of our Redeemer, and the priceless value of the benefits which come to us through His atonement, we shall not confine our praises to the sanctuary,—the voice of rejoicing and salvation will be heard in our dwellings. And in converse with our friends, we shall take pleasure in expressing our love and gratitude by commending our Redeemer, and spreading abroad the savour of His name. The Song of Solomon represents the spouse as seizing every opportunity of setting forth the grace and beauty of Him whom her soul loved (Mal. iii. 16, 17).

## V.—INVOCATION OF CHRIST.

“And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”—Acts ii. 21 ; Rom. x. 13.

Prayer is a duty which we owe to the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as to the Father. Christians are described by Paul as persons who “call upon the name of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. i. 2); and we find all the apostles, in their epistles, supplicating for the churches or believers to whom they wrote, grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is not only the Mediator, by whom we draw near to God, but a Divine Person equal with the Father, the giver as well as the purchaser of all saving blessings. He is the object of our faith, and how shall we not call on Him in whom we believe? We have indeed no authority from scriptural precept or example to pray that He would be pleased to perform His work of intercession on our behalf, nor is there any occasion for such petitions. Let us, by a genuine faith, commit our souls to His care, and we may be assured that He will be faithful to His trust. But we are authorised to seek from Him those precious blessings, and we are sure that He is more ready to bestow than we are to ask them,—only we must leave to Himself the time and the way of answering our requests. Paul besought the Lord thrice that the messenger of Satan might be made to depart; yet his trial was continued, and the Lord did better things for him than he asked (2 Cor. xii. 9). The divinity of

Christ makes Him the proper object of our worship; but we are encouraged to seek and expect spiritual blessings, because He is man as well as God, and because He is our Redeemer. He died for us, and what gifts will He deny us? He is touched with a feeling of our infirmities. He was Himself a petitioner when He was upon earth. It is worthy of remark, that Stephen, in his dying moments, presented the same request to Christ which Christ, when expiring on the cross, presented to His Father. "Lord Jesus," said the proto-martyr, "receive my spirit." Jesus knows the heart of a petitioner, and when we both present our requests to Him as God, and by Him as Mediator, with what confidence may we expect an answer in peace.

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#### VI.—OBEDIENCE TO CHRIST.

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."—JOHN xiii. 17.

Obedience to Christ is a duty imposed upon us by the authority of His Father. God hath made Him both Lord and Christ, and calls upon all who hear the Word, not only to receive the blessings of salvation, but to yield obedience to Him as their Lord. To give flattering words, and yet live in open violation of His laws, would be to act the part of Judas, who betrayed the Son of Man with a kiss. We must love our neighbour, not merely in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth; how much more ought we by our deeds to testify the sincerity



of our love to our blessed Saviour. "If ye love me," He says, "keep my commandments." These commandments may be divided into two classes—those which the law of nature enjoins, and those which are laid upon us by the revealed will of God. We are to testify our love and subjection to Christ by our obedience to both of these. The laws arising from our natural relation to God and to one another contain their recommendation in themselves, for they are all holy and just and good. Apart from Christ's advent and sacrifice, so binding are our obligations to obey them, that the least violation entails a just sentence of condemnation.

But obedience is no less due to the positive institutions of Christ than to those laws which nature itself teaches us to obey. He is our Lord, and it is but reasonable that He should assert His own authority by laws and ordinances resting on His sovereign will. A positive law was given to our first parents, that by obedience to it they might manifest their regard to the will of God. In like manner Christ, our Redeemer, has instituted ordinances in His Church, by the observance of which we can testify our regard to Him as our Lord. Were we to behave virtuously towards our fellow-men, whilst living in the neglect of the duties which are peculiar to Christianity, we might with propriety be called "virtuous heathen," but it would be a profanation of the worthy name by which they are called to rank us among "Christians." A servant honours his master, a subject obeys his prince ;

if Christ is our Master and King, His appointments must be observed, His work must be done. He calls us friends rather than servants, but for this very reason we ought to serve Him faithfully, cheerfully, with all our heart, without intermission, and without end. Apart from the authority on which they rest, other reasons commend to us the institutions of Christ. His wisdom and grace may be seen in them. They are fitted to exert a most beneficial influence on our hearts and lives. They are the means of carrying on intercourse with heaven, and with Him whose death or life, or royal authority, are clearly represented to us in every gospel ordinance.

To render to Christ the obedience demanded we must acquaint ourselves with His laws and institutions. By the study of the Scriptures, and by prayer, we may easily come to know what the will of the Lord is. He has commanded nothing in vain; and it is dangerous to break, or teach other men to break, even the least of His commandments (Matt. v. 19; Ps. cxix. 6).

That we may yield faithful service to Christ we must renounce every other lord, and break off from all sin; for what concord hath Christ with Belial? We must not attempt to serve both God and Mammon—yea, our own will must be renounced, in so far as it is opposed to the will of Christ.

We have earthly superiors, but we must obey them only in the Lord; and when we act thus, we yield obedience to the Lord Himself.

Jesus, our Judge and Lawgiver and King, is likewise our strength and sufficiency. This makes His

yoke easy and His burden light. He is a kind Master, who promises to strengthen for duty, support under opposition, and compensate for all the losses and sufferings endured in His service. What loyal subjects should we be were we assured that the sovereign would give a kind testimony of regard for every act of cheerful obedience! But what is a smile or a gift from the greatest earthly prince, compared with the gracious approval of our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ? "If any man," says He, "serve me, let him follow me, and where I am, there shall also my servant be. If any man serve me, him will my Father honour."

Doubtless self-denial must be exercised in our obedience to Christ. But why should it be deemed a hardship to deny ourselves for the sake of Him who pleased not Himself, who lived a life of sorrow, and died an accursed death for our salvation? Neither should it be forgotten that we do not really lose what is given up for His sake. It shall be compensated, "receiving an hundredfold now in this time, and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark x. 30).

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#### VII.—IMITATION OF CHRIST.

"Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps."—1 PETER ii. 21.

We are to testify our faith and love to Christ by walking as He walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. There are too many princes who behave like the ancient Jewish

doctors, who laid heavy burdens upon men's shoulders, but would not themselves touch them with one of their fingers. Jesus, on the contrary, though Himself the Lawgiver, yielded implicit obedience to the laws which He has enjoined on us. Of His own free will Christ was made under the law, and His obedience to its most self-denying precepts was complete and perfect, lacking nothing. . . What saint on earth could ever say, I have no sin? But our Lord was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. We may err greatly by walking, without caution, in the steps of Abraham, or Moses, or David, but the life of Christ was a "living law," no less perfect, and every way fitted to recommend the "written law" to our regard and practice. "Be ye holy," says God, "as I am holy."

There, is, however, one great difference between that holiness which is the glory of the Divine nature and the holiness required from us. God is the Lawgiver, and we are the creatures to whom the law is given. God's holiness, therefore, could not consist in obedience, as ours must do. But Jesus Christ showed forth all the beauties of holiness in an obedience rendered to the law in our own nature. Further, there is a glory in Divine holiness too dazzling for our eyes to look upon. Unless seen in Him who is the image of the invisible God, we should feel amazed and terrified with the sight of God's awful holiness. But that holiness is familiarised and endeared to us in the person of the Man Jesus Christ. Nor should the perfection of His obedience discourage; it assures

us that we cannot possibly go wrong in imitating Him. The eminent saints of whom we read in Scripture never hoped to attain absolute perfection in the present life ; but keeping their eyes fixed on our Redeemer, and endeavouring to trace His steps, they reached higher degrees of holiness than they could otherwise have done. Such a man was the Apostle Paul, who, though the humblest of men, could exhort the churches to be followers of himself, even as he was of Christ (1 Cor. iv. 16, 17 ; xi. 1). The Lord filleth the desires of them that fear Him ; by faith in His name, we shall receive out of His fulness, and grace for grace—grace corresponding to that grace which is in Christ Himself. Let us, then, aim at that moral purity which Christ exemplified ; though following at a great distance, our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. Whilst with open face, as in a glass, we behold the glory of the Lord, we shall be changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

That we may rightly follow the example of Christ, we must distinguish between those parts of His conduct in which He exercised powers, or performed works peculiar to Himself as our Redeemer, and those in which He manifested regard to that law which is the rule of our conduct. We dare not lay claim to the glory of Christ's miraculous works or mediatorial offices. It is vain to pretend to observe a fast of forty days, to rule the winds and waves, to heal diseases, or disclose the secrets of the human heart, in imitation of our Saviour. Equally vain

would it be to seek to rival Him in His saving work ; but, as Christ died for the Church, we ought also to be ready, if called on, to lay down our lives for the brethren ; as He did everything pertaining to His high office, we ought also to do all that lies in our power to save souls from eternal death. Jesus could not repent of sin, because He knew no sin ; but He set us an example in His hatred of sin, in His grief for sins not His own, and in His uniform obedience to His Father amidst all the temptations with which He was surrounded.

Although Christ appeared in the form of a servant, yet princes may learn from Him how they ought to govern their subjects. Whilst exhibiting that condescension, meekness, forbearance, and wisdom which should beautify the character of those who are placed in high stations, He never forgot what was due to Himself, and amidst all the familiarities to which He admitted His disciples, He maintained the dignity and authority which belonged to Him as the Master and King of the Church. Besides, princes are taught to rule by the virtues and glories which shine forth in every part of His administration (Ps. lxxii.)

Although our Lord did not form those family connexions that are common in the world, yet heads of families may learn from His example how they are to behave as becometh Christians. Let masters act towards their servants as Christ did towards His disciples ; let husbands love their wives even as Christ loved the Church ; let children obey their parents as the child Jesus was subject to His. That we may be

furnished with that prudence and those dispositions which are necessary for the successful imitation of Christ, we must daily pray for the illuminating and sanctifying influences of His Spirit. It is also needful that we be well acquainted with those precious records that give us the history of His life and death. Among other valuable purposes served by the four different accounts given us of "the things that Jesus began both to do and to teach," this is not the least, that, by their attentive perusal, such an impression of facts and instructions is left upon the mind as is not easily effaced. With the histories of the evangelists in our hands, we can never be at a loss to know the character of thought, speech, and conduct by which, in different circumstances and situations, we may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing. A superficial thinker may imagine that the circumstances of Christ's life were so unlike those in which we are often placed, that on many occasions we can obtain no suitable direction from His example. No doubt much spiritual prudence is necessary in making the example of our Lord useful to us, but, when we cannot see His footsteps, we may, at least, discern the spirit by which He acted. He always preferred the glory of His Father to His own ease, or any other consideration whatever. He always preferred men's spiritual to their temporal interests—their real advantage to their wishes. In all circumstances He acted according to the will of God, and His heart was constantly intent upon that great work

which He came into the world to accomplish. We follow the example of Christ whilst we live under the governing influence of such principles. If the mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus, we shall find it pleasant to follow Him whithersoever He goeth. Were He to lead us to our rest through seas of blood, through furnaces seven times heated, ought we not cheerfully to follow Him who drank out the bitterest dregs of the cup of misery, that we might be furnished with those joys of salvation that turn the waters of Marah into wine. How much more should we follow Him through ways which, though hard, rugged, and thorny to flesh and blood, are all paths of pleasantness and peace. What man suffered more, or did more, for Christ than Paul, but he could thank God for making him always to triumph in Christ. In nothing was he ashamed, and he was not deceived in his earnest expectation that, whether in death or in life, Christ would be magnified in him. "For him to live was Christ, and to die was gain."

Let us also set the Lord always before us, and though oftentimes in heaviness through manifold temptations, through His Spirit imparted, we shall endure unto the end. In due season we shall reap if we faint not. For it is a faithful saying, if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him. It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is (1 John iii. 2).



OF THE

Duties we owe to God the Father.

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**N**O man hath seen God at any time. The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him. The glory of the Father shines forth in the doctrine, in the person, in the work of Christ.

When He gives us the light of His glory, it is in the face of Jesus Christ. If we have not seen the glory of the Father in the Son, the Gospel is hid from us, and we are still in darkness. But if we have seen the glory of God in the face of Christ, our hearts will be filled with wonder and love; and we will ascribe salvation unto our God, who sitteth upon the throne, as well as to the Lamb.

Although we know that we can make no adequate requital for His love, we will be desirous of showing forth our gratitude by all the methods prescribed in His Holy Word.

When we ascribe glory to God the Father for our redemption by His Son, and our sanctification

by His Spirit, we are far from excluding any of the Divine Persons from an equal share in our gratitude.

The Father, in the counsels of grace, sustained the majesty of that Godhead which belongs equally to each of the Divine Persons. On this account the name of God is sometimes appropriated to the First Person, although we are sure that by an equal right it belongs to the Son and the Holy Ghost. As the Godhead which belongs to each Person in the Trinity was glorified in our redemption by Christ, so in the purpose and contrivance of our redemption by the Father, the Son and Spirit appear equally glorious with Himself.

If we do not honour the Son even as we honour the Father, and if we do not honour the Spirit even as we honour the Father and the Son, we forget the essential unity of the Godhead, the equality of the Divine Persons, their reciprocal relations, their inseparable conjunction, their common right to the homage and service of all who are baptised in their name.

The Scripture tells us that all spiritual blessings originate in an eternal purpose which was formed by God in Christ Jesus our Lord, and that all that has been, or shall be, done by our Saviour in securing the blessings of salvation is the result of that merciful appointment (Eph. i. 3, 4; iii. 9-11; Rom. viii. 28-31). The question now to be considered is, What shall we render to the Lord for His eternal thoughts of mercy towards guilty men;

and for His gracious agency, through His Son and Spirit, in accomplishing His intentions?

That we may render unto God our grateful homage for what He has purposed, and for what He has accomplished, *we ought to know and believe the love of God towards us.*

### I.—KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF OF HIS LOVE.

“We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.”—1 JOHN iv. 16.

What was the grand design of God in contriving the plan of human redemption, and raising up for us a horn of salvation? His purpose, saith Paul, was “that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.”

Nothing can be more groundless than the notion which some have entertained, that we have more reason to confide in the love of Christ than in the love of the Father, as if the Father’s love to us depended on the mediation of our Redeemer. It is, indeed, certain that all the blessed effects of God’s love come to us through Christ, but it is no less certain that Jesus did not pray for the Father’s love, nor purchase it by His sufferings. On the contrary, Christ became our Surety and the High Priest of our profession, because God, who loved us, called Him to undertake and execute on our behalf all that was necessary to our eternal peace.

In every part of our salvation the glory of the Father's love is displayed to the admiring eyes of the believer.

When human pride can discern nothing that is amiable, but much that is repulsive, the humble faith of the Christian beholds a "love that passeth knowledge." In His predestination of some sinners to life, whilst others are passed by, the Almighty is represented by men of corrupt minds as a capricious tyrant, dooming multitudes to perdition whom He might with as good reason have appointed to salvation. But this very circumstance is, to humble believers, a clear and unequivocal demonstration of the freeness and sovereignty of the love of God. They know and are assured that there is no unrighteousness with Him, and that He can visit none with His wrath but such as well deserve it. When at the same time they are assured that many are chosen to obtain salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ, they infer on sure grounds that nothing but the sovereignty of grace could make the distinction, and that all the praise of salvation is due to God Himself, for it is He only that makes one man to differ from another. What can be plainer than this, that God cannot treat sinners worse than they deserve. It is therefore no less plain, if the doctrine of election be true, that He treats many of them infinitely better than they deserve, and that the reasons of that goodwill by which they are distinguished are to be found entirely within Himself.

Those who will not believe the doctrine of per-

sonal unconditional election deny to God the glory of the absolute freeness of His grace. Something in the creatures chosen to life appears to them to have been the cause of God's special love. But when we know and believe that Divine mercy made the distinction, we ascribe all that praise to God which others would share betwixt Him and His creatures. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory!" are words which in their full sense cannot be used but by those who believe that the happy partakers of His salvation were "predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." If God made a distinction between one man and another, because He foresaw that the one would improve His grace better than the other, we might indeed ascribe to Him the glory of exact righteousness, and of a high degree of goodness; but if He determined to communicate saving grace to some rather than others, simply because it pleased Him to make that distinction, then all who partake of His love have reason to say with adoring gratitude, "He hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."


Since sovereign grace appears illustrious in the free bestowal of eternal life upon multitudes who are not by nature more worthy of it than those who perish in their sins, so also the whole purpose and contrivance of the scheme of mercy must be attributed to the same glorious cause. God could

be under no obligation to save one of the human race more than all the children of Adam, for they were all in the same lost and ruined condition. Neither could He be under any obligation to save fallen men rather than the angels who kept not their first estate, and are doomed to hopeless perdition for a single sin. What, then, but sovereign love could form an eternal purpose of salvation for sinners of the human family? What but infinite grace could foreordain the incarnation of the Son of God, and His obedience and death in room of the guilty? He had no need of the love or service of His fallen creatures. He foresaw what enmity against His unspotted purity and His Divine authority would possess their hearts. Yet in His love and pity His wisdom planned their salvation, and He entered into covenant with His beloved Son to accomplish it. Sacrifice and offering God did not desire, but it was His eternal will that we should be sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

The delight of the Father, no less than that of the Son, was from eternity with the sons of men; and therefore when Adam sinned, God said, "Deliver him from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom." Salvation was revealed and communicated to the guilty progenitors of our race; and the Son of God executed His Father's pleasure in the recovery of myriads from their fallen condition, long before He actually came into the world to make His soul an offering for sin.

The fulness of the time being come, "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons." He "so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Was it possible that He who is Himself love could give a more amazing proof of His mercy? He not only gave His Son to suffer for our sins, but His own hand inflicted those awful sufferings which none but an incarnate God could endure. He was not merely delivered up to be insulted, smitten, and crucified by wicked men, "it pleased the Lord also to bruise him, and put him to grief." Such was God's love to His guilty creatures that for a season He even hid His face from His own beloved and holy Son. No wonder that the sun was covered with thick darkness when the Creator of the universe shrouded the Son of His love with so dark a cloud in the day of His anger.

Christ compares His love to His people to the Father's love to Himself. The comparison is so wonderful that we find it difficult to recognise its propriety. Still it is fully justified by this most amazing of all transactions. To stand in doubt of the love of God when He Himself declares it, is inexcusable; but to call it in question when attested by the blood of His own Son, is beyond measure criminal. The love of God appears not only in the incarnation, sufferings, and death, but also in the



resurrection and glory of our Redeemer. As He died for our offences, He was raised again for our justification, and received up into glory, that our faith and hope might be in God. If God's love to Israel was the reason why Solomon was made king, that He might execute judgment and justice among that highly-favoured people, how much more ought we to magnify that love which advanced our Lord to the throne of His glory, that He might sway a sceptre of mercy over the human race, and fully accomplish the salvation of His people!

Nor is the love of the Father less evident in the office and operation of the Holy Spirit. God knew that no human being, without the effectual working of the Spirit, would be led to avail himself of the redemption devised by the Father and accomplished by the Son. Such is our natural blindness that we cannot understand the necessity or value of Christ's salvation. Such is our pride and stubbornness of spirit that we will rather perish than come to Christ for life, unless our eyes are opened, and our hearts of stone softened and made hearts of flesh. But God in His great mercy sends His good Spirit to enlighten our dark minds, and subdue our rebellious wills to a hearty compliance with His plan of mercy. If we admire that love which sent the Son of God in the likeness of sinful flesh that He might be made a curse for us, we have no less reason to be astonished at the display of love seen in the gift of the Holy Ghost, that He may dwell in hearts defiled by that abominable thing which God hates,




and by sanctifying them wholly, make men meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. In the persons and work of Christ and of the Holy Spirit we behold the love of the Father in its freeness and sovereignty, eternity, immutability, and incomprehensible excellency !

Nothing can be more unscriptural than to entertain ideas derogatory to the love of the Father, through our grateful admiration of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. That we are not indebted to Christ for the love of the Father is manifest from the fact that we have the brightest proof of that love in the accomplishment of the Father's purpose, in the incarnation and death of His Son. God does not love us because Christ died for us, but Christ died for us because God is love. He is not merely a God of love, but He is love itself; and hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us.

God would have been eternally and immutably worthy of the supreme love of all rational creatures though He had never purposed to save a single sinner or pardon any sin; but He could not, in that case, be the object of delight to those who could expect nothing from Him but fiery indignation.

Some will, perhaps, say that if they were assured of their own election they would believe in the love of God, and join with the apostle in blessing Him who had already "blessed them with all spiritual blessings in Christ, according as He hath chosen them in Him before the foundation of the world."



But, as matters stand, they profess to be unable to take any comfortable view of the Divine nature, since, for aught they know, God may be to them a "consuming fire."

Let us beware of perplexing ourselves about matters which, being too high for us, lie beyond our comprehension. Secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong unto us, that we may observe to do according to all the words of God's law.

It is true we are deeply interested in the question, whether we belong to the happy number of God's elect or not, and it is a point on which we may obtain complete satisfaction to our minds if we only take God's way of obtaining it.

The revelation of God in His Word is the rule and foundation of our faith. Let us receive Christ as our own Saviour by believing in His name, and through faith we shall assure ourselves of God's special love. When we believingly commit the salvation of our souls into the hands of Christ, we can have no reason to doubt our election by God; because faith in Christ is always the fruit of electing and unalterable love. Of certain among the Gentiles it is said, "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts xiii. 48).

If we felt the love of God in our bosoms, say some, we would believe the love of God towards us. But how can we hope to feel our hearts inflamed with love towards God before we believe His love to us? "We love him because he first loved us." His love

to us must go before our love to Him; it must be known and believed in, that we may feel constrained to love Him in return. We must first plant the tree before we gather its precious fruits. Realising the great love wherewith He hath loved us, we shall be led to love Him with all our hearts. Such love is the fulfilling of the law, and it always brings with it peace and joy, and the other comforts of religion.

Let us, then, banish all unworthy jealousies of that grace which so wonderfully solicits our hearts by unfolding all its matchless beauties in the face of our Redeemer.

Can anything be more trying than to find that our friendship is suspected by those to whom we have given the most expressive and engaging proofs of its sincerity? Can anything be more displeasing to God than to have His love called in question by those who know that He has sealed His testimony to it in the blood of His Son? The first complaint He makes against Israel in the last book of the Old Testament is, that they ungratefully called His love in question. "I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us?" (Mal. i. 2). May not this complaint be made with greater reason against Christians who refuse the witness of His own Son, who lay in His bosom from eternity, and came from heaven to earth, and expired on the cross, to demonstrate the love of His Father, and procure for us all its delightful effects?

"What iniquity have your fathers found in me?" said God to His ancient people. "Have I been to

Israel a barren wilderness or a land of darkness?" He was greatly displeased when His people behaved towards Him as if He had shown them no favour. Will He be less displeased now with those who give no heed to the word of reconciliation, which in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son? We may meet with hard providences in this evil world, but let us not measure God's love or hatred by His present dispensations. Shall we imagine that God is displeased with us because He does not satisfy all the inordinate cravings of our hearts? "He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things."

If He does not give us everything that the heart desires, it is just because He knows we are better without it. Unless you know of something more precious than His own Son, you can mention nothing which God would refuse if He saw it to be really beneficial for you. After all that He has done, after all that His Son has suffered, after all that His Spirit has undertaken to accomplish, do you still require the gifts of health or wealth to clear your minds from doubts of the truth of what God says when He assures you that "He is Love?"

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## II.—CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is."—JEREMIAH xvii. 7.

Assurance of the love of God the Father manifested in Christ Jesus, ought to be attended with a firm confidence in God under all those gracious characters which He has been pleased to assume.

The sum of the Gospel is this: that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. We ought, therefore, to regard God as a God of peace, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and depend on His kindness and goodwill to us.

Whilst we were in a state of enmity we had good reason to be afraid of Him, but being reconciled by the death of His Son, we may rejoicingly say, "Lord, we will praise thee, for though thou wast angry with us, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst us. The Lord Jehovah is our strength and our song, and he also is become our salvation."

The house of Heber the Kenite was at peace with Jabin the oppressor of Israel, and stood in no fear of that cruel tyrant while the rest of the Israelites were groaning beneath his thralldom. Believers in Christ are at peace with God, and have therefore no cause to tremble under apprehen-

sions of that vengeance which hangs over the ungodly.

Contrariwise, they ought to bless the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, and thereby gave full assurance that the work of reconciliation was fully effected. In view of the completeness of that work, they may rest assured that the very God of peace will sanctify them wholly, and that their souls, bodies, and spirits shall be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Glory to God in the highest heavens, because there is peace and goodwill towards men! What may we not expect from Him who is pacified towards us for all that we have done?

Surely we need not distress ourselves with anxious thoughts, even about those objects in which we are most deeply interested. God is at peace with us, and no enemy shall be able to do us hurt. Let us implicitly confide in Him, and commit all our concerns into His hand, and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. The designs of His grace shall be fully accomplished, and believers shall at last be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless. The Lord is the God that justifieth the ungodly. This is His name for ever, and by this name it is His will to be trusted and glorified. It was known to Abraham and to the believers who lived before Abraham, but the full glory of it is now published to the world by

the word of the Gospel, in which the righteousness of God by faith is revealed to faith (Rom. iii. 23-26).

When we believe in Christ we believe in the grace and faithfulness of the Father, who raised up Jesus from the dead, and hath set Him forth to be the propitiation for sins, through faith in His blood.

By our faith we do not give greater glory to the Son than to the Father. It is the will of the Father that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father who hath sent Him, and it is no less the will of the Son that all men should honour the love of the Father in our justification, even as they honour His own grace in laying down His life for us (Rom. viii. 30-32; John vi. 44).

God is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, by that everlasting covenant which was made between the Father and the Son. This covenant is "all our salvation," and it is no less glorious to the Father and the Son than salutary to us (Ps. lxxxix.) By our instalment in this covenant, He who is the God and Father of Christ becomes our God and Father in Christ, and authorises us to claim all the blessings of the covenant in the name of Him who is the head of it, and who perfectly fulfilled its conditions (Ps. lxxxix. 49).

We ought, therefore, to trust in God as our God by an inviolable covenant, which has been already confirmed in Christ. If He were our God in the same way in which He was related to Adam in innocency, He might soon cease to be our God, and

become a dreaded enemy. But in Christ He is our God by a relation that cannot possibly be dissolved; and with full assurance of faith we may say, "This God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death." His righteousness shall be an immutable security against the loss of His favour. He must prove unfaithful to His blessed Son and to Himself before anything can separate us from His love, or deprive us of the glorious blessings of His covenant (Isa. liv. 7-10; Jer. xxxi. 31-34).

God is our Father, because He is Christ's Father. We are not only His children, but our adoption is founded on His relationship to our Head and Husband. If we are betrothed to Christ, His Father is our Father, and the love wherewith He loves His Son is cherished towards us. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God!" Behold what encouragement we have to confide in God, and what sure grounds we have for expecting from Him blessings as superior to those bestowed by earthly parents upon their children as God is greater and more gracious than men.

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." As a father will not give a stone to his son asking bread, far less a scorpion when he asks from him a fish, so the Lord will give nothing that is bad, but everything that is good, to His children, and they may safely, at all times, confide in His love. Doubtless



they shall meet with many trials in life, but these are just the corrections of a wise Father, who values the happiness of His children above their ease. They are all proofs of paternal love, for "what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?" Since God is our Father in virtue of our relationship to Christ, we may confidently expect from Him all the blessings connected with the present life which are really needful for us (Matt. vi. 26-32; vii. 7-11).

A very small heritage of worldly good things coming from the love of our Heavenly Father is better than all the riches that can be possessed by those who have their portion only in this present world. We may be assured, too, that we shall not be suffered to want those spiritual blessings purchased by Christ,—we shall be fed with the children's bread, and satisfied with the fatness of our Father's house. Still all we enjoy here is as nothing in comparison with what we are taught to expect in another world. "If we are sons, then we are heirs,—heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." Being justified by the grace of God, we are made heirs according to the hope of eternal life, and nothing can deprive us of our title, or exclude us from the possession. How wonderful that God should put such sinners as we are amongst His children, and give us a sure right to His pleasant land!

Since it has pleased Him to give us a name and a place in His holy family, surely it is base ingratitude to stand in doubt of our enjoying the promised inheritance. We are indeed quite unfit

to enter the region of spotless purity, but we are bound daily to give thanks unto the Father, who through the Spirit of holiness makes us meet for the joys and exercises of heaven, and who takes effectual care that nothing shall defeat His kind intentions towards us (1 Pet. i. 3-5).

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### III.—LOVE TO GOD.

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord : and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”—DEUTERONOMY vi. 4, 5.

We are bound to love Him supremely who hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace.

If we know and believe in God's love to us, we shall find it impossible to withhold from Him our hearts. He would be entitled to our supreme affection even though Christ had never been sent to die for us. The law binds us to love the Lord our God with all our hearts ; and that law, which is just and holy, cannot demand from us a love exceeding Jehovah's righteous claims. Angels loved Him to the utmost extent of their capacity before they were informed of His gracious designs towards the human family, and our apostacy did not render Him less worthy of love. But how infinitely amiable does He now appear when we see Him in Christ not only a God of love, but Love itself. If we do not

give Him all our hearts, even fallen angels might upbraid our ingratitude, for such love was never manifested towards their nobler race ! His love to us was absolutely undeserved, we had done nothing to merit His favour, we possessed no qualities fitted to attract His regard ; on the contrary, we were covered over with those pollutions which have rendered multitudes of creatures the objects of His eternal displeasure. What would have been our condition if we had been left like devils to sink into irretrievable perdition ! How can we ever pay that debt of gratitude we have incurred to Him who withheld not from us His Son, His only Son, whom He loved ! Our love can be no recompense for His love. God needs it not. It cannot make Him more blessed than He was before He had called our world into existence. Yet He sets a high value upon our affection. After all that He has done for us, this is the sum of what He requires in return, —that we love Him with all our hearts, and our neighbours as ourselves. Let us enthrone Him in our hearts, and love Him better than ourselves, and above every other object. In a spirit of true devotedness, let it be the business of our lives to testify our thankfulness to Him who has sought by such amazing methods to gain possession of our hearts.

Shall we grudge anything to Him who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us ? Shall any waters be allowed to quench the affection kindled by redeeming love ? Were our hearts ten thousand

times larger than the heart of Solomon, they could not contain all the love which is due to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Nor is love due to God merely because He has loved us. We must love Him because in His own nature He is perfectly holy and righteous. When we were strangers to Christ we could not love infinite holiness, for however lovely in itself, it is always a source of terror to guilty creatures. But now the holiness that formerly seemed to frown, smiles upon us with a lustre not less pleasant than splendid. Though God is still of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, yet He looks upon sinners with a merciful eye; and because He is the holy, holy Jehovah, He will perfect our sanctification, that we may be fitted for intimate communion with Him in the world of bliss.

God's justice, too, is very terrible to the workers of iniquity; even saints must stand in awe of this "holy, righteous Lord God." But fear must not lessen our love. We are to serve the Lord with fear, and at the same time "rejoice with trembling." Though we derived no personal benefits from God, He would still be worthy of the whole love of our hearts. He deserves it on His own account, independently of all that we have received, or can receive, at His gracious hands. But apart from the intrinsic beauty of all the Divine perfections, we find that each of them is engaged, through Christ Jesus, to promote our best interests.

Because God is infinitely holy, He will perform

all the promises made to His dear Son on our behalf. He hath sworn by His holiness that He will not lie unto David. Because He is infinitely just, He will punish all His enemies, and will bestow on His people all the blessings purchased for them by the precious blood of His Son. He will not be unrighteous to forget any of the works of faith or labours of love we may do in His name, far less will He forget any of the work accomplished by the Lord Jesus, or any of the sufferings endured by Him for our salvation (Isa. xli. 6-8).

That we may abound in love to God, let us daily meditate on His glorious attributes, and His great love towards us in Christ Jesus our Lord. The more we think on these things the more shall we be led to lament the coldness of our own hearts, and to pray for a richer communication of spiritual blessings to our souls, and that we may prove less ungrateful to Him whom we have such infinite reason to prefer above our chief joy (Ps. xl. 5, 6 ; 1 John iv. 17-19).

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#### IV.—FEAR OF GOD.

“Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy.”—REVELATION xv. 4.

The fear of God must be joined with love.

Perfect love casteth out that fear which hath torment in it. But there is a very different kind of fear which sweetly harmoniseth with love, and

is powerfully enforced by every view which the Gospel gives of the agency of the Father, as well as of the Son and Spirit, in our redemption.

What can be more certain than the irreconcilable aversion of the Most High God to sin in all its different forms. The whole plan of salvation is such as to convince every thoughtful mind that He is indeed of purer eyes than to behold evil or look upon iniquity; that He is light, and in Him is no darkness at all; that He is greatly to be feared in the assembly of His saints, and had in reverence of all them that are round about Him. "Fear him," saith our Saviour, "who hath power to kill both soul and body, and cast them into hell fire." If God is to be feared because He can inflict such awful punishment upon creatures, how much greater fear will seem to be due unto Him when we consider how He bruised His own Son, and put Him to grief!

"If ye call on the Father who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." Remember the words of our Lord when He was led forth to crucifixion: "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" If the holy and beloved Son of God was not spared when He undertook to be the Surety of the guilty, what unpardoned sinner can escape the damnation of hell? The justice of God is inflexible. His righteousness is like the great mountains. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but no transgression or disobedience shall go unpunished (1 Pet. i. 24, 25).

The faith and hope of the Christian give no encouragement to presumptuous boldness in drawing near to God, or to indifference about sin. On the contrary, their practical influence is to fill us with a holy dread of the Divine Majesty, and a sincere desire to avoid even the appearance of evil. There is forgiveness with God that He may be *feared*; for it is only to be obtained through Him "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins." If we could have obtained pardon without such a satisfaction having been made for sin, we might not unreasonably have supposed that God was not irreconcilably opposed to iniquity; but "mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other" in Christ Jesus. When we look to Him whom we have pierced, and feel that we are criminals who could not be rescued from the hands of justice but by His atoning work, we cannot but mourn sincerely, and acknowledge that it was indeed an evil and a bitter thing to forsake the Lord, and live without His fear. We are now, through the grace of our Redeemer, secured against the fatal effects of our apostacy. But shall a sense of personal safety tempt us to regard sin lightly? God forbid. For this very reason, because "receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire." He is found to be a consuming fire in the misery of the lost; but still more does He appear to

be a consuming fire in the salvation of His own people. They are not, indeed, doomed with the wicked to dwell amid "everlasting burnings," but that devouring fire which was due to their iniquities scathed the soul of their Divine Surety. He stood in the breach, and endured what they must have inevitably suffered had not One taken their place who was able to give full satisfaction to the justice of God. The seraphs that surround the throne of God in heaven cover their faces with their wings, although they never provoked the displeasure of their Divine Creator: "Behold, he put no trust in his servants, and his angels he charged with folly," or at least with natural fallibility and comparative imperfection. With what veneration and awe ought He to be approached or contemplated by the children of Adam, the transgressors of His covenant!

If after all that God has done to show forth the awful glories of His holiness in the person and work of Christ, we do not fear that glorious and fearful name, "the Lord our God," it is painfully apparent that we neither know God, nor Christ, nor ourselves; that we have no part nor lot in His salvation; and that we are blind to the brightest discoveries which have been, or can be, made of that terrible majesty with which the Almighty clothes Himself as with a garment (1 Pet. i. 17, 18).

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## V.—PRAYER TO GOD.

“Ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.”—JEREMIAH xxix. 12, 13.

We ought to draw near to God, with holy boldness, through the help of the Spirit, and in the name of our Redeemer, to solicit all those blessings which, as sinful dying creatures, we need.

Under the law, none but priests were allowed to offer sacrifices unto God. Ordinary worshippers, desiring to offer sacrifices of righteousness, could only present them by the hands of the ministers of the sanctuary. We have no priest but Christ; He is not only the great, but the only High Priest of our profession. We ourselves are a spiritual priesthood, but our sacrifices can be accepted of God only through Jesus Christ. However unworthy we and our best services may be, still we are sure that our approaches to God, in the name of His dear Son, are well pleasing to Him, and that every request presented in faith through this Mediator will be granted. Seeing, then, that we have “a great High Priest which is passed into the heavens (or through the heavens), Jesus, the Son of God, let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may

obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Under the Levitical dispensation none but the high priest was allowed to approach the mercy-seat, and that only on one day each year. Neither David nor Samuel were permitted to set their feet within the holy place. But the way to the Holiest of all is now made manifest by the blood of Jesus; and if we do not improve our privilege, we despise our own mercies.

And why should we be afraid? He who sits upon the throne is our Father, and we dare not call in question His love. Christ tells us that He had no need to pray for the Father's love to His disciples, because the Father of Himself loved them. He directs us, in our addresses to the Hearer of prayer, to say, "Our Father which art in heaven;" and some of His instructions to petitioners at the court of heaven are founded on the principle that there is infinitely more of love and pity in the heart of our Heavenly Father than in that of any parent upon earth (Matt. vii. 7, 11; Luke xi. 1-13).

We are indeed very guilty, and have good reason to confess that our iniquities have separated between us and God, and that our sins have hid His face from us; still, we have free access to the Father, through Christ our "Daysman." The blood of "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin;" and He who died for us is our Intercessor before the throne. "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

Worthless and vile as we are, Jesus deserves the richest blessings, and when we believingly present our supplications in His name, we have the strongest assurance that we shall not meet with a refusal (John xiv. 13, 14).

It is true we know not what to pray for as we ought; and our hearts are too cold and indifferent about spiritual things to suffer us to pour forth our requests to God with that fervour of spirit which becomes men pleading for the life of their souls. But through Christ we have access by one Spirit unto the Father. We are also directed to pray in the Holy Ghost. His help is promised. By His gracious influence we shall be taught and enabled to pray in an acceptable manner for things agreeable to the will of God. "He who searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." "He is the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, Abba, Father." "And like as a father pitieth his children," crying to him for bread or protection, "so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."

What rich encouragement is thus given us to come to God in prayer in the name of Christ, through the Spirit. How inexcusable the unbelief that rejects the testimony of each Person of the blessed Trinity. All these Divine Persons are pledged by their respective offices in the plan of grace to secure the success of our devotions. We have not only a merciful Father, disposed to hear

and answer our prayers, but an Intercessor to plead for us, and another Divine Being who enables us to present our requests aright. What shall we say to these things? "O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come."

We will come to Him in the name of His own Son, who hath opened up the way by His precious blood, and now liveth to make intercession for us. We will come under the influence of His own Spirit, who is sent into our hearts to fill us with that holy boldness, that fervour of desire, that spirituality of disposition, which God requires in His petitioners.

We are fools if we suffer any day to pass over our heads without improving our precious privilege of free access to God. Every day we need new supplies of Divine mercy. Were we left to ourselves for a single hour, we should fall into such sins as would embitter the whole future of our lives. David in one unhappy moment brought such miseries upon himself and family and people as occasioned grief and pain until the day of his death. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall, and cleave with full purpose of heart to Him "who alone is able to keep us from falling, and present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."

But there are special seasons when we stand in peculiar and pressing need of rich supplies of grace. In the hour of sickness or temptation or distress of conscience,—when persecuted for righteousness'

sake, or suffering from the loss of friends, or the reproach and ill-usage of our fellow-men,—at the approach of death, or in the presence of some overwhelming perplexity,—at such times we are in danger of fainting, even of sinking into utter despondency; but “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Trust in the Lord at all times. Ye people, pour out your hearts before him. God is a refuge for us. In six troubles he shall deliver us, yea, in seven there shall no evil touch us.”

Christ must have lost His interest at the Father’s throne if those petitions which are presented in His name be disregarded (Phil. iv. 6, 7; Heb. vii. 25).

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## VI.—DEVOTEDNESS TO GOD.

“One shall say, I am the Lord’s; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.”—ISA. xliv. 5.

We ought to devote ourselves to the Lord, as a God reconciling the world to Himself in Christ.

As God hath chosen us to salvation in Christ Jesus, we ought to be to Him for “a name and a praise.” “Thine they were,” saith our Lord, “and thou gavest them me.” But when He gave them to Christ, He did not give them away from Himself. “All mine,” says Christ, “are

thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them." When God chose Israel to Himself for His peculiar treasure, to impress them with a sense of the value of the distinction, He reminds them that all the earth belonged to Him. As universal Lord, He might have chosen any other nation He pleased; and being equally the Lord of all worlds, He might have selected angels instead of men, to be the monuments of His sovereign mercy. But having chosen us, and that when we deserved to be rejected for ever, how can we refuse to yield ourselves entirely to Him, that we may be to the praise of His glory? "Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." A wonderful price indeed at which we were valued! Let us not, therefore, account ourselves our own, but glorify God with our bodies and with our spirits, which are His. With this view Christ died, that we might be redeemed and sanctified to God. "For their sakes," said He, "I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth." "Thou wast slain," say the ransomed of the Lord, "and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." Do we not frustrate the grace of God and His Son when we live to ourselves rather than to Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us? God sends forth the Spirit into our hearts to take possession of us as His temples,—shall we alienate our souls or bodies from Him? God forbid. This would be to repeat the profanity of ancient times, when idols were

introduced into the sanctuary, and received that worship which was due only to the Lord of heaven and earth.

If God has chosen and redeemed us, and promised His Spirit to purify us to Himself, surely we ought not to shrink from giving ourselves to the Lord, and coming under the most sacred engagements to be His servants. It is true we have good reason to be afraid of that innate spirit of selfishness which is continually tempting us to prefer our own gratification to the glory and service of God. We cannot by our own strength subdue this corrupt spirit, but the electing, redeeming, sanctifying mercy of God secures to us those communications of grace which will preserve us from that which, insinuating itself under the pretence of self-love, is the worst of all plagues. They love themselves best and most truly who love God better than themselves, for we never can be happy until we cease to be the slaves of self, and become the Lord's freedmen. When He inclines our hearts unto His testimonies and not to covetousness, we shall find it very easy and pleasant to deny ourselves, and submit unreservedly to His will. Happy they who, released from the fetters that kept them in bondage to themselves, are now enjoying the sweets of that service which is perfect freedom. Having presented our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service, let us beware of ever recalling the gift. We are not at liberty to act towards the Most High as if He were a fellow-creature. When we have

bestowed a gift upon a friend, it is deemed ungenerous to ask it back. God is infinitely greater than men, and the greater, therefore, the insult in claiming for ourselves what we had freely devoted to His service. Can a man rob God and prosper? No part of our possessions is more precious in His eyes than ourselves. Our hearts are infinitely more valuable than thousands of gold and silver.

Having consecrated ourselves to the Lord, we must cleave to Him, and serve Him while we have any being. Our thoughts, our affections, the members of our bodies, our time, all that we have, and all that we are, must be His, and His only. We must willingly spend and be spent for His glory. We must live like persons devoted to His fear. Our chief happiness must consist in furthering the interests of His kingdom. If it be His will that we suffer for His sake or from His hand, we must not think that we are treated with severity. He would not through sickness or other causes keep us in a state of inactivity did He not know that He would be glorified thereby. "They also serve who only stand and wait" (Ps. xvi. 2; cxvi. 16, 17).

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## VII.—JOY IN GOD.

“Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.”—PSALM cxlix. 2.

We ought to rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the reconciliation.

“The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.”

What joy can equal that of those who find in these words the record of their own experience? Why may not all believers in Christ confidently make use of such language? They are justified by faith, and have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. They are the objects of a love that knows no limits. The Lord rejoices over them with joy. He rests in his love; he joys over them with singing. And why should not they also rejoice in the Lord, and glory in the Holy One of Israel?

Let them recall their former condition that, in the contrast between the past and present, they may feel the joy of that blessed change. By nature they were the children of wrath, even as others. They were exposed to the fierceness of that displeasure already displayed towards fallen angels. But now

they have passed from death unto life. Instead of being angry, God takes pleasure in them. Coming to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, they have come to God, the Judge of all, and the sentence pronounced on them is of peace, not of evil. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" Who is he that will harm them when God is on their side? "If God be for them, who can be against them?" They would still be poor indeed, though put in possession of heaven and earth, without an interest in God. But all things are theirs, and He who made and preserves all things is theirs also. The God whose glory is above earth and sky is the portion of their inheritance, and of their cup He maintaineth their lot. This God is their God for ever and ever; He will be their guide even unto death.

Joy is the duty and privilege of the saints. Who would not rejoice if he were exalted to the throne of a mighty empire? A man might be thought to have better grounds of joy had he the certain assurance of living a thousand years twice told in the possession of everything held dear on earth. And yet, what would all this avail to one whose soul is so constituted that nothing earthly can give it solid happiness. A "perpetuity of bliss" is bliss indeed to an immortal soul, and a perpetuity of bliss is the portion of him, and of him alone, who can say that the Lord is his God. "I will rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garment of salvation,

he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." "I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy." These were some of the sweet songs of ancient believers. They are recorded in Holy Scripture, that they may be sung by believers in Christ whilst the world stands. By such songs, in the house of their pilgrimage night is turned into day, and the spirit cheered amid the valleys of humiliation and death. Blessed is the man whose heart is tuned to such music; yea, blessed are all they whose God is the Lord. They are blessed beyond their own comprehension, they are blessed beyond the comprehension of angels. They ought to feel and acknowledge their blessedness, that they may glorify Him who is its author, its object, its eternal fountain (1 Chron. xvi. 35, 36).

If we had all the riches and pleasures of Cræsus, or Nebuchadnezzar, the very thought of the precarious tenure by which we held them would damp our joy, and perhaps turn it into misery. We know not how soon we shall lose everything but the memory of a past happiness. But the man whose hope the Lord is, can look calmly into the future, and say, My heart and my flesh shall fail me, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. Time, which is every day stealing away some part of the happiness of other men, is every hour bringing nearer and nearer the perfection of his felicity.

The period is rapidly approaching when Christ shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father.

The meaning of this passage may be disputed by divines, but every Christian knows that its import must be full of glory to God and to His Son Jesus Christ, and of abiding consolation to all the redeemed of the Lord. A state of blessedness in the immediate enjoyment of God is before them. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor thought conceived what it is. This much we know, that nothing on earth can give half the pleasure in possession, which the glory to be revealed gives in hope and foretaste. The electing love of God, the redeeming love of Jesus, the sanctifying grace of the Spirit will in the future state have their full and complete influence upon the redeemed.

Who can imagine the glory of that kingdom which was prepared for its inhabitants before the foundation of the world, by the everlasting love of God ! Who can understand the riches of the glory of Christ's inheritance in the saints, the fulness of the joy of the Lord on which all His people enter ! What nobler exercise can now engage our heart or tongue than thanksgiving and praises to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, " who hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." Amid all the trials of earth we have reason greatly to rejoice in such a blessed hope ; and we cannot but rejoice if our faith is firm, for " faith is the substance of things

hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The glory redounding to God through our salvation is a consideration that increases our joy. If not utterly selfish, we must be filled with gladness at the thought that thousands and millions of our fellow-beings will share with us the joys that are at God's right hand. Most of all shall we rejoice when, in their felicity and our own, we see God glorified through the complete accomplishment of His plans of redeeming mercy. The Lord shall rejoice in all His works, but chiefly in His works of grace. The glory of the Lord shall continue for ever. Eternity itself will not exhaust the praise of any of His works, least of all of that glorious work to which we are indebted for our redemption from the worst of evils, and our enjoyment of the best of blessings. "Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous; again we say, Rejoice." "Rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." "Bless the Lord at all times; shew forth His salvation from day to day; Glory ye in his holy name." "Let the heart of every one rejoice that seeks the Lord."

OF THE  
Duties we owe to God the Holy Ghost.

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**S**AITH Job, "The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life." If we are really Christians, the Spirit of God has made us "new creatures." We are baptised in the name of the Holy Ghost, as well as in that of the Father and the Son, and to be ignorant of the grace of the Spirit, or careless about the duties we owe Him, is no less inexcusable than to be insensible of our obligations to Him "who loved us and gave Himself for us."

I.—BELIEF OF SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE CONCERNING  
THE SPIRIT.

"Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance."—1 THESS. i. 5.

We are commanded to hold fast the doctrine which we have been taught. And the doctrine concerning the Person, Attributes, and Work of the

Holy Spirit is not less interesting and important than the truths relating to the other Persons of the Godhead. Our salvation stands as closely connected with the communion of the Holy Ghost as with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God. The very first commandment of the law requires us to know and acknowledge the only true God as God and our God, and to worship and glorify Him accordingly. But who is this only true God? The Bible gives ample information on this point. It is a light to our feet, to preserve us from vice, error, and idolatry. But it would be an extremely dim light, yea, little better than an *ignis fatuus*, if we could not learn from it with certainty whether or not the Spirit of God is really divine, and a distinct Person in the Godhead.

Opposite opinions on this subject have prevailed amongst those who call themselves Christians, but we are not on this account to suppose that the Holy Scriptures have not made known in sufficiently plain terms who that God is whom we are bound to worship and trust. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." Let God's Word be acknowledged as a rule of faith, worthy of its Divine Author, although the wisest of the sons of men should be accounted foolish and blind. Whatever views may be put forth regarding the work and the Person of the Spirit, by any set of men however learned, this must be admitted by all who allow the Bible to be the Word of God, that its authoritative statements are to be preferred to a thousand ingen-

ious arguments. It is not human reasoning, but Scripture testimony that must decide in regard to any truth on which holy practice and everlasting salvation depend. Nothing can be more certain, than that the Spirit of God is frequently represented in Scripture as a Person—as a Divine Person—as a Divine Person to whom we are indebted for the possession of all those benefits which were purchased for us by the Lord Jesus Christ. If this is the testimony of God concerning His own Spirit, why should we be troubled or shaken in mind by the various notions which speculative men have entertained concerning Him.

There were different opinions about Jesus in the days of His flesh. Some of these were thought at the time to be very honourable to Him, although they came far short of ascribing to Him that authority and dignity which He justly claimed. Some men took Him for Elijah, others for Jeremiah, others for John the Baptist; and others were disposed to welcome Him as the religious teacher, infinitely superior to all these, who, according to ancient prophecy, should make his appearance in the latter ages! Still, none gave to Christ that honour which was His due,—none received Him in His true and proper character save those who believed that He was the Messiah promised unto the fathers, the Saviour of the world, the Son of the Blessed!

The men of highest reputation for learning in the nation of Israel had still lower ideas of Jesus.



They declared Him to be a blasphemous impostor, and deceiver of the people. But were the men who studied and understood the Scriptures to become doubtful of the true character of Jesus simply because none of the princes or philosophers of that age knew Him? They were bound to yield an unreserved submission of understanding to His Word. "If ye believe not," said Jesus, "that I am He, ye shall die in your sins." As we were received into the Church in the name of the Holy Spirit, as well as in the name of the Son of God, we must give an equally firm assent to the doctrine of Scripture regarding Him. We must depend as much upon the Spirit for the application of redemption as upon the merits of Christ for the purchase of it. But how can we intelligently look for all that life and strength and light from the Holy Spirit which are absolutely needful, if we are uncertain what and who He is?

The great objection to the distinct personality and divinity of the Holy Ghost is founded on the impossibility of conceiving of more Persons than one in one Godhead. But this difficulty is met by those conclusive arguments which prove the divinity of the Son of God. If He is God, He must be a distinct Person from the Father; and if so, there must be more Persons than one in the Godhead; and it is not more incredible that there should be three than two Divine Persons. That we may be rooted and grounded in that article of our creed which asserts

the personality and Divine glory of the Holy Ghost, we should search the Scriptures with a care proportioned to the tendency which men have shown to obscure what is said of the perfections of that Divine Being. Let us treasure up in our minds the testimony of Scripture in regard to His offices and the worship to be rendered to Him, that we may be able to silence gainsayers, calling in question those truths which are most certainly believed among us. The Bible was written by holy men, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and certainly He gave no direction to these penmen to write a single word derogatory of Himself,—which would have been the case had they been taught to use expressions, leading men to suppose that a person who is not truly the supreme God is entitled to the honour and worship which belong to none but the Most High. “Behold, God is great, and we know him not;” but He knows Himself, and when He is pleased to reveal Himself, we are bound to believe what He says. Let us, then, receive and rejoice in all those discoveries He has been pleased to give of His own nature, of His mode of subsistence, of His manner of working, of everything that relates either to Himself or His creatures.

“The meek will he guide in judgment; the meek will he teach his way.” And the meek will daily pray that they may be led into all truth, preserved from the errors of false teachers, and from the corrupt reasonings of their own deceitful hearts. From the Spirit Himself we must receive that

spiritual understanding which will enable us to form just conceptions of His character and work. Having obtained such scriptural views, let us hold them fast, confessing them with the mouth, and with all proper weapons exposing the misrepresentations of those who would rob us of our faith and hope,—yea, even of our God.

The doctrine relating to the Holy Spirit is, undoubtedly, a vital article of that faith which was once delivered to the saints. We ought to contend for it earnestly, and hold it forth before the world in an intelligent and steadfast profession. On this subject, as on others, we must beware of adding to, or taking from, the teaching of Holy Scripture. There are not a few in whose creed appropriate prominence is given to the personal distinction and glory of the Spirit of God, but an inferior place to His special work in the application of the redemption purchased by Christ. As it is dangerous to join any other righteousness with the righteousness of Christ, it is no less so to claim for human goodness or endeavour any of that honour which belongs exclusively to the good Spirit by whom we hope to be conducted to the land of uprightness.

God does everything for His own glory, and it is impiety to lay claim to any part of it. The kings of Babylon exposed themselves to the severe displeasure of God when they “sacrificed to their own net, and burned incense to their own drag,” claiming to themselves the credit of those victories which He had won for them. Herod Agrippa was eaten up

of worms because "he gave not God the glory." Jehovah is jealous of His holy name, and will not allow another to receive the praise due to His own gracious operations. His richest revenue of glory comes from His works of grace. Let us beware of obscuring that glory by partial representations of the character or mutual relations of the Three Persons of the Godhead, without whose combined agency the work of human redemption must have been left for ever unfinished.

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## II.—APPREHENSION OF THE NECESSITY OF HIS OFFICE AND WORK.

"Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."—ROMANS viii. 9.

It is no less certain that we must perish for ever without the renewing, sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, than that we must have been for ever lost had not Christ been set forth to be a propitiation for our sins. We are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ only by the effectual application of it to us by His Holy Spirit. We cannot believe in Christ until impressed with a sense of the infinite value of His salvation,—this is brought home to us through a vivid consciousness of personal guilt and danger. But when we fully

realise that we are by nature lost and helpless, we shall see that the enlightening, purifying influences of the Spirit are as needful as the expiatory work of our blessed Saviour.

That we may prize aright the gift of the Holy Spirit, we ought to understand the nature of the office committed to Him; and the circumstances in our own condition which render His gracious operations absolutely necessary. *We are by nature in a state of darkness*, and it is only by the "illumination" of the Holy Spirit that the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ can be conveyed to our minds. No eye hath seen, no ear hath heard, no heart hath conceived the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. God hath revealed them in His Word, by His Spirit, who searcheth all things,—yea, the deep things of God. The same Spirit who causes the light to shine, imparts the power of vision that we may see and know the things that belong to our peace. *We are dead in trespasses and sins*; to us is that word of grace addressed—"Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." But we cannot respond to that call, nor obtain the fulfilment of the accompanying promise, until quickened by the Spirit, who is the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord*, and without the sanctifying influence of the Spirit no man can be holy.

Sin is naturally our delight. Until renewed

in the spirit of our mind, we deem it impossible to enjoy happiness apart from the gratification of sinful inclinations. Even after the process of purification is commenced, such is our weakness, such the power of remaining corruption, such the strength of surrounding temptations, that it will be marred or altogether undone unless He who began the good work carry it on to the day of the Lord Jesus. A knowledge of our corrupt propensities reveals to us the value of the promise of the Spirit, as the Spirit of sanctification, through whose influence alone we can mortify the deeds of the body and perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. God promises the gift of His Spirit; but "for this," He says, "will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." God will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him; but how shall they ask Him with any fervency of desire unless convinced that His agency is absolutely necessary for the life of their souls (Ezek. xxxvi. 25-27).

*The Spirit is promised as a comforter as well as a sanctifier.* The name Comforter fails to bring out the full meaning of the corresponding word in the original; yet it expresses a part of it, and gives prominence to that view of His office specially suited to the circumstances of the disciples, when their hearts were filled with sorrow at the prospect of Christ's departure from them. Christians are often too feebly impressed with the importance of this view of the work of the

Spirit of grace. Consolation does not appear so needful as sanctification. Sure of obtaining heaven at last, there are some who undervalue the foretastes of heavenly felicity to be enjoyed on earth. It is to be feared that such persons regard heaven more as a refuge from the evils and sorrows of the present life than as a scene of worship and holy fellowship. If we really long for those pleasures which arise from the full enjoyment of God in another world, we shall, even here, be solicitous not only for the communication of sanctifying grace, but for the assurance of His loving-kindness and for the joys of His salvation. It is the Holy Spirit alone who can shed abroad the love of God in our hearts, and enable us to rejoice in Christ Jesus. No abiding persuasion of our happiness and safety can be obtained unless the Spirit bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. The accusations of Satan and of our own hearts cannot be silenced at the bar of conscience, unless the Comforter give evidence in our favour. It is the Spirit that seals us unto the day of redemption, by stamping His own image upon our souls, shining upon His own work, and shielding us from the attempts of enemies to cast us down from our excellency. The Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, and if we are filled with joy unspeakable at the prospect of entering the purchased possession, we are indebted for it to the love of the Spirit. The consolations of the Spirit are no less necessary than pleasant. They are needed to strengthen us for discharging

duty, overcoming temptation, and enduring the trials of life. There is within us a body of sin,—what can support us amidst the conflict occasioned by the working of this indwelling evil principle? If we excuse ourselves, saying that we cannot hinder it, that it is to be found in all our fellow-men, and that we cannot expect its complete destruction here, our views are very different from those of the holy Apostle Paul, or the Psalmist David. Does the commonness of anything alter its real nature? Is God under any obligation to pardon the sinful race of Adam, or to dispense with the punishment it has incurred, because all men without exception are conceived in iniquity and born in sin? We deceive ourselves if we imagine that our souls can prosper while we continue unaffected with the corruptions of our own hearts, and careless about those comforts which God hath provided for spirits broken with a sense of sin. These consolations are dispensed only by the Holy Ghost. It is under His influence that we are enabled to mourn over the principle of evil within us, saying, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” It is under the same influence that we are enabled to praise God in the prospect of deliverance, and the assurances of pardon and peace (Rom. vii. 19-25). The necessity of the consolations of the Spirit for animating to the performance of duty is no less evident. “The way of the Lord is strength to the upright,” but not without those gracious influences which render the hardest services



pleasant. To serve God aright, we must do so with cheerfulness ; for if our hearts be not engaged in the work, it will be a perpetual burden—neither profitable to ourselves nor acceptable to God. “The joy of the Lord is our strength,” and under its influence we shall find “that the ways of wisdom are pleasantness, and all her paths peace.”

*But we need the strengthening no less than the comforting influences of the Spirit.* He must work in us “both to will and to do.” We shall not be disposed to do, unless He works in us to will. We shall not be able to do what we would, unless He works in us to do. Whatever we do in word or in deed must be done in the name of the Lord Jesus. On Him we must depend for help as well as for acceptance. But all the help that Christ gives is conveyed to the soul by His blessed Spirit. Through Christ we all have access by one Spirit unto the Father. We are commanded to pray in Christ’s name, but we know not what we should pray for as we ought, and must therefore depend upon that Spirit who helpeth our infirmities and maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. The same dependence must be placed on Him in every other service required of us, if we would walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing. We cannot, therefore, set too high a value upon the work of the Holy Ghost. The soul of man is not more necessary for his body than the influence and operation of the Spirit for our souls. He is the animating soul of that life which we live unto God.

He is our light, our comfort, our strength, the applier of Christ's salvation.

Nor can we forget that it is an important part of the office of the Spirit to confer those spiritual gifts which, though not necessarily connected with the salvation of their possessor, are absolutely necessary for the successful administration of the ordinances and means of grace, by which sinners are converted and saints edified. Whence did Paul obtain those splendid endowments which made him so successful in spreading the knowledge of the Gospel throughout the world? What he was—he was by the grace of God; what he did—he did by the grace of God!

In his first epistle to the Corinthians he shows with much minuteness of detail that all those gifts by which we may be serviceable to the Church are communicated by the Holy Spirit, who divideth to every man severally as he will (1 Cor. xii.) As the temple of Zerubbabel was built not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord, so the Christian Church has been reared, and the building still goes on under the fostering care of the same Spirit. He separates men for the work to which He calls them. He furnishes them with all needed qualifications. He enables and disposes them to improve their spiritual endowments for the benefit of others. Their successful exercise is the fruit of His influence on the souls of men. In every point of view the work of the Spirit is infinitely important. All His operations are acts of almighty power; only

a Divine Being could undertake and accomplish them. Until we are made partakers of the Holy Ghost we can have no part in Christ, nor any solid comfort in the profession of His religion. If we knew the gift of God, our hearts would cry out above all things for the Spirit. He would be deemed more precious than life, and all those honours, riches, and pleasures which are supposed to give value to human life.

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### III.—PRAYER FOR THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT.

“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children : how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.”—LUKE xi. 13.

If we desire the fellowship of the Spirit, and realise the true value of His work and offices, we shall certainly lift up our hearts in prayer to God, and earnestly plead with Him for the gift of the Holy Spirit. God has authorised, and Christ has given all possible encouragement, in the presentation of such a petition (Ezek. xxxvi. ; Luke xi. 13). Earthly parents are willing to gratify the reasonable requests of their children, but the most devoted human affection dimly shadows forth the infinite loving-kindness of our Heavenly Father. The best of men compared with Him are evil.

God's readiness to give the Holy Spirit should stimulate to prayer even those who have as yet no reason to conclude that they have been placed among His

children. He calls such to the exercise of faith in Christ, and to confidence in Himself as the God and Father of all who believe in His Son. He directs the worldly-minded Jews to say : " Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God. Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth ? " The woman of Samaria, with whom our Saviour conversed at Jacob's well, was doubtless a great sinner, and yet Jesus directed her to pray for the Spirit of grace—" If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." The evangelist tells us what he meant by these words—" He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive " (John vii. 39). It may, indeed, be plausibly objected to this doctrine, that without spiritual influence men cannot pray to God in an acceptable manner; why, then, should they be asked to pray for the Spirit until certain that they have the Spirit? Let not proud mortals call in question the wisdom of God's commands, or the duty of endeavouring to comply with them. Was there ever a more rebellious set of men than the ancient Israelites that came out of Egypt? Yet when they were commanded to " go forward " when the sea was before them, they did not pause and say, " Why should we go forward? Better to die by the swords of the Egyptians than amid the devouring

waters." Stubborn as they generally were, they complied with the Divine command, and had no reason to regret their obedience. The man whom our Lord commanded to stretch out a withered arm did so without hesitation, and his inability was not felt. Happy would it be for all men if they could be induced to make the Word of God, and not the reasonings of their own minds, the rule of their conduct.

Sinners when brought to serious consideration are not at first sensible of their own utter inability to convert themselves. They generally make many attempts to forsake their sins and amend their lives before becoming thoroughly convinced that there is no hope for them in themselves. But this discovery, instead of leading them to despair, should drive them to the only true refuge of lost sinners. The salvation of our souls is impossible with men, but not with God. It is His glory to show the strength of His arm in cases when creatures can do nothing. Jeremiah describes what should be the conduct of anxious sinners in the case of repenting Ephraim. God heard him bemoaning himself thus—"Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke." Does Ephraim then say, there is no hope? There was indeed no hope for himself, in himself, but what he could not do, he knew could easily be done by God. "Turn thou me," he said, "and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God." This prayer was speedily heard, and Ephraim becomes God's dear son, his pleasant child; God

earnestly remembers him, His bowels are troubled for him, and He will surely have mercy upon him. Manasseh was a singularly wicked prince : he made the streets of Jerusalem to run with the blood of God's witnesses ; yet he prayed, and the Lord was entreated of, and pardoned him. We do not read that Simon Magus prayed, as Peter advised him to do. But that sorcerer is no fit example for men seeking the salvation of their souls.

Let the unconverted be impressed with a sense of their need of the gracious almighty influences of the Holy Spirit, and present their humble supplications to the Lord. While they are yet speaking, He may hear and answer them. Who can tell but that even now He may be secretly inclining them to compliance with the directions of His word, that He may begin and carry on the work of grace in their souls. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Those who have already received the Spirit are enabled by Him to continue instant in prayer. The Spirit of grace is a spirit of supplication, a spirit of adoption, making us cry, Abba, Father ; and what better use can we make of His influence than to pray for larger communications of it. He to whom this living water is given will thirst no more for the pleasures of sin ; but as the hart panteth after the water brooks, so will he thirst for new supplies of the grace which includes in it everything truly good.

The promises of Scripture encourage us to pray for the Spirit. When Christ came into the world, He renewed the promise of the Spirit already published by the ancient prophets. When He was about to die, He comforted His disciples by the assurance that He would send the Comforter unto them; and He did not fail to put them in mind of the same promise after He had risen from the dead. Let all, then, be encouraged to pour forth their desires and supplications before God for the effusion of His Spirit. He was promised to the disciples, but not to them only. He was to come and convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. He was promised to the apostles, but not simply for their personal benefit, but to fit them for preaching that Word which was to be the ministration of the Spirit of life to the dead. When we pray for the Spirit, it should be with importunity, it is insulting to the Hearer of prayer to ask such a priceless blessing with feelings of indifference or formality. We ought also to present this request with a due sense of our own unworthiness. The gift of the Spirit to dwell in polluted hearts is as wonderful an illustration of the riches of Divine grace, as the gift of the Son of God to be "made sin for us, who knew no sin." Nothing but inexcusable pride can suggest the thought that holy resolutions or honest attempts at reformation can confer a title to the most inestimable blessing which sovereign mercy can bestow. At the same time we ought to present our supplications with a firm persuasion

that God will not deny our requests for His own name's sake. When God promised by Ezekiel to put His Spirit within disobedient professors, to cause them to walk in His statutes, He adds this humbling consideration—"Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you : be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel" (Ezek. xxxvi. 25-32). But he calls upon the house of Israel at the same time to inquire, and to expect the accomplishment of the promise (ver. 37).

Having prayed for the Spirit, we must look and wait for an answer. The Church waited long for the coming of the Messiah, who at length appeared in the world at the time appointed by Divine wisdom ; and one great end of His appearing was that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith ; for this end also He ascended on high, that He might send down the Spirit. Let the knowledge of all this confirm our hope of those communications without which we can obtain no benefit from what Christ has already done or is now doing in our behalf. But whilst we pray and wait for spiritual influence, let us beware of provoking God to deny us His grace. If we have been enabled to pray earnestly and sincerely for the Spirit, we may feel assured that He has been already exerting His influence, and will certainly fulfil the desires which He has excited ; but if we indulge our carnal inclinations whilst imploring His sanctifying grace, it is too evident



that we are insincere in our requests. It is true that no man can begin the work of sanctification within himself, but must continue under the dominion of sin until the Spirit takes possession of his heart. But sinners can make themselves more unholy than they are—just as, through the common operations of the Spirit even before conversion, they may refuse to gratify many of the desires of sin. He that stole may restrain his hands from stealing, the swearer may refrain his tongue from oaths, the man who rolled sin as a sweet morsel in his thoughts may turn his mind in some measure to the consideration of the things that belong to his eternal peace. The sinner who prays for holiness, but makes no effort to stem the current of iniquity within him, is a dissembler. He is not only destitute of the Spirit, but destitute of that serious concern about salvation which the Spirit generally excites, when about to enlighten men in the knowledge of truth. Our praying to God in the name of the Son, for the Spirit, might have been discussed under former heads, as part of the duty which we owe both to the Father and to His Son Jesus Christ, from whom we are to expect the gift of His Spirit. But it must be remembered that each Person of the Godhead glorifies each of the other Divine Persons. The Father and the Son glorify the Spirit in sending Him, and the Spirit glorifies the Father and the Son in coming and doing those works for which they send Him. By praying the Father that He may give us the Spirit through the

Son, we render unto the Holy Ghost such glory as pertains to His special office in the work of our salvation. We acknowledge that we are no less dependent upon His grace than upon that of the Father and the Son, and that without Him we cannot even cherish a good thought in our hearts.

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#### IV.—DEPENDENCE ON HIS PROMISED HELP.

“Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.”—ZECHARIAH iv. 6.

Here there are two errors to be avoided. *First*, Let us beware of placing our dependence upon ourselves. Self-conceit naturally tempts to self-dependence. Men are apt to trust in themselves that they are righteous, when not impressed with a sense of their natural inability for doing anything that is well-pleasing to God. *Second*, Beware of that despondency which is so often occasioned by deep personal convictions of weakness and depravity. How often have we to complain of languor in our religious services,—our affections are dull and spiritless, and a thousand distracting thoughts push themselves into our minds. Grieved and perplexed, we are at such times ready to say, “Why should we attempt to wait upon the Lord? We are quite unfit for communion with Him, all our efforts to keep the heart steadfast in duty issue only in shame and disappointment.” In such a state of mind let us

reflect that it is part of the office of the Holy Spirit to "strengthen with might in the inner man," and to sanctify "our whole spirit and soul and body." If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. If spiritual vigour come by the exertion of our own unaided powers, then the Spirit is promised in vain, and He has undertaken an office which, being superfluous, can bring Him no glory! A moment's reflection will show that the grace of the Spirit, to help our infirmities, is no less needful than the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, to purchase our salvation. We know that the Son of God came and died as it was written of Him in the volume of the book. And the Spirit is no less willing to fulfil His part in the economy of grace by fitting us for every good work. The Three Persons of the Godhead show forth the equality of the glory of their grace and power in the work of human redemption. The special agency of each is indispensably necessary for the completion of the glorious plan. That we may be able, without self-dependence on the one hand, or unnecessary fears on the other, to undertake the performance of the duties which God requires of us, we ought to make ourselves well acquainted with the mission of the Holy Spirit, and the nature of that help which He engages to afford in the service of God. Until we know in some degree what we may expect in the way of Divine help, presumption or despondency will spoil our offering; but the more we are acquainted with

the grace and the office of the Spirit, we shall advance the more cheerfully and successfully in the path of duty. Prayer is one of those exercises to which Christians are daily called. Their necessities require it. God enjoins it. But how shall we pray in a proper manner? How shall we obtain that deep reverence of the Divine Majesty, that firm confidence in God's mercy, and those fervent desires for spiritual blessings without which our prayers are but a dead form? We are not only defective, but entirely destitute of every requisite qualification for acceptable prayer. How, then, shall we come before the Lord, and bow ourselves before the High God? We dare not restrain prayer before Him, but are forbidden to approach without reverence and godly fear, without faith and love and holy desire. What, then, are we to do? We must pray, says the Apostle Jude, "in the Holy Ghost." We are not to desist from drawing near till we feel the Spirit inflaming our souls with love, but depending on His promised aid, we must come with boldness to the throne of grace, in the humble expectation that our spiritual sacrifices will be accepted, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and recommended by the powerful intercession of Christ. The command to pray in the Holy Ghost contains a promise in its bosom. He who never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain, would not have enjoined us thus to pray if we had not good reason to count upon His help. We do not expect from Him any new revelation, but we may warrantably look for

illuminating power, which shall enable us to discern the value of those blessings promised in the Bible, and to form just conceptions of our own necessities. We cannot hope for such transporting views of God as the saints in heaven enjoy, but we may reasonably expect that we shall be animated with such apprehensions of the glory of God and of the excellency of His grace, as shall make us pour forth our desires before Him in the joyful confidence of being heard. "I will pour out," says God, "upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication." "We know not," says an apostle, "what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, and maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered; and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

We must not neglect such preparation for the service of God in prayer, or any other duty as becomes rational creatures, who know that they have to do with a Being who cannot be mocked. By preparatory meditation, by the study of the Word of God and of our own hearts, and by the consideration of God's dealings with us and others, we should furnish ourselves with some knowledge of the things for which we ought to make request unto God. Diligence and humility are equally essential to success. Expectations of the help of the Spirit, whilst slothfully neglecting the rules which He has

given in His Word, are presumptuous ; and it is no less presumptuous to depend on our preparations, as if we had a sufficiency in ourselves to think anything as of ourselves. Our sufficiency is of God ; but for this very reason we must endeavour to stand perfect and complete in all His holy will. As we must not neglect prayer, because we have not felt the Spirit moving us to pray, so we must not discontinue the practice of this duty because we cannot say that we have been conscious of His influence in performing it. We may easily be mistaken on this point. It is often extremely difficult to distinguish between the ordinary operations of the Spirit of grace and the natural workings of the mind. They are, therefore, best judged of by their tendency and effects. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there and nowhere else is liberty. If we worship God with that reverence and love and hope and joy, which reason itself tells us should be mingled with our devotions, we may be assured that the Spirit of God is operating powerfully within us, His presence being indicated by these fruits of the Spirit. What we have said of the duty of prayer is to be applied to other religious services, all of which are to be performed in the exercise of those graces implanted in the heart by the Spirit of God. The great rule of gospel worship is laid down in these words: "Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." As we cannot worship God acceptably but in the name of Christ, so neither can we worship Him aright except through the help of the Holy

Spirit (Rom. xv. 6). Amongst other reasons why we ought to value the ordinances of religion, this is one of the strongest, that God is accustomed through them to communicate His Spirit unto men. Hence the word of grace is called, the ministration of the Spirit, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. We cannot obtain health by running away from the physician. Those who are sensual, not having the Spirit, ought to attend with all diligence upon the public administration of the Word, in the humble hope that while hearing, He who first caused it to be written, and now causes it to be preached, may make it the instrument of spiritual quickening to their souls. In the Acts of the Apostles we are informed that Paul was sent forth to minister the Gospel unto men, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. The work which the Spirit only can perform is thus ascribed to Paul, just because His spiritual influences accompany the preaching of the Gospel, and are received by the hearing of faith. But the efficacy of the word of life is not confined to the sanctuary. The word is nigh unto us, even in our mouths and in our hearts. The Spirit may be received through the Word, in the use which we make of it in the exercises of the closet and of the family. These private duties are prescribed by God as well as those which have reference to the institutions of the Church. We must perform them all in the exercise of those holy graces which are the fruits of the Spirit. Thus only shall we find them useful for our

improvement in holiness and our more abundant consolation. Blessed is the man whose strength is in God, and in whose heart are the ways of His tabernacle. Such persons shall go from strength unto strength, and every one of them shall appear at last before God.

The duties of Divine worship do not make up the sum of our religion. Love to men is no less requisite than love to God, and this, like the other, must be manifested by its fruits. But how shall we perform any duty which we owe to our fellow-Christians without spiritual help? All our services to our neighbours must be animated by charity. Should we give our goods to feed the poor, should we give our bodies to be burned, and yet be found destitute of charity, it profiteth us nothing. There is a natural as well as a spiritual love. The former is, indeed, amiable and pleasant when compared with that grossly selfish disposition which is so prevalent in the world, and it is to be feared that not a few professors of religion are satisfied with this kind of love, as if it were all that God required in that great commandment which regulates our duty to our neighbour. But we have not so learned Christ. Nothing can be truly well-pleasing to God which is not the work of His Spirit within us. Hence Christian love is called, love in the Spirit (Col. i. 8). The Spirit given to Christians is called a Spirit of love, and the love of the Spirit spoken of by Paul (Rom. xv. 30) appears to me to signify that love to one another which is wrought by the Spirit in the heart of believers. Love is the



great and animating principle of the communion of saints. "Let all things," says Paul, "be done in charity. But let us not be satisfied with any love which is not wrought in us by the Spirit. That humanity, which is a very beautiful trait of character when it is properly regulated, may greatly mislead when it is left to operate according to the dictates of human wisdom. The children of Israel might lay claim to humanity when they spared the nations of Canaan, and it is not at all improbable that they were impelled by this amiable principle to neglect obedience to the Divine command. But the love of the Spirit always operates according to the rules of His Word. Phinehas acted under the impulse of this love when he slew a prince of the Simeonites and a Moabitish lady in the act of wickedness. There was true love to Israel expressed by Samuel when he killed Agag with the sword, just as Saul's pretended humanity to the same prince was the outcome of enmity to God's people, whose best interests were sacrificed to his own selfish purposes. Peter really loved his brethren of Judea in the Holy Ghost, but his complaisance to them at Antioch was no proof of it. Paul's heart burned with a purer love to Jewish as well as Gentile Christians, and to Peter himself when he rebuked that apostle to the face, because he was to be blamed. It is therefore necessary for us to depend on the Holy Spirit for constant supplies of grace for the acceptable discharge of duty towards our fellow-Christians and all men. If left to ourselves, love would speedily disappear

and give place to mutual coldness and contentions. In the love of the Spirit, ministers must preach, elders must rule, deacons must serve tables, and Christians must comfort, instruct, reprove, and edify one another. How beautiful and attractive would Christian societies become if pervaded with a spirit of love, and all their mutual services rendered in humble dependence on those promises which are our encouragement for the performance of every duty we owe to God or man! There are many offices of love which we owe to our relatives, to our neighbours, and to the world around us. The love which animates in such relationships must be excited and kept in action by the Divine Spirit. More of the religion of Jesus consists in service to others than is commonly supposed. Let every man in his own station and circumstances show the power of the Gospel of Christ. But that Gospel will never exercise its due influence upon our conduct, except by the power of the Spirit of Christ. Love, gentleness, meekness, faith, temperance, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness,—these precious virtues must spread themselves through every part of our life and character. But all these virtues, if they are Christian graces, are fruits of the Spirit. Now if we live in the Spirit, we must also walk in the Spirit, by practising those graces of which He is the author and finisher, and by habitual dependence upon Him for producing and maintaining those lovely tempers by which we may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.

## V.—DILIGENT IMPROVEMENT OF HIS FAVOURS.

“The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.”—1 CORINTHIANS xii. 7.

There are gifts bestowed upon men by the Holy Spirit for the service of the Church and the good of the world ; and He also confers graces of a saving nature for the personal benefit of those who receive them. The Spirit manifests His sovereignty in the distribution of these gifts and graces, and it should be ours thankfully to acknowledge His goodness, and use what He gives for the purposes contemplated in their bestowal. The Christians at Corinth were enriched with extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, but many of them, forgetting from whom and for what end they were given, grossly abused them, to the prejudice of the Church and to the dishonour of their Divine Author. For this Paul sharply reproved them (1 Cor. xii.) We live not in an age of miracles, but we have no reason to complain if we are blessed with those better things that accompany salvation. If we have also received gifts which may be made profitable to others, they should be diligently cultivated by the use of all proper means. This is a duty especially incumbent on ministers of the Gospel, and on those who have the office of the holy ministry in view. Even in the apostolic age, when supernatural endowments were so common, they were not to be made a pretext for sloth. “Till

I come," says Paul to Timothy, "give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all" (1 Tim. iv. 13-15). It is sinful indolently to hide our talents in a napkin, but it is still more sinful to pervert them to purposes injurious to the interests of religion. It was said of a great man of a former generation that God had bestowed upon him great talents, and the devil had taught him how to use them. Woe to those men who turn the favours of God into engines of mischief to mankind, and destruction to themselves! Let us beware of such misapplication of our talents, that God may not lose the fruit of His goodness, and that there may be no ground for the reproach that the servants of Satan display greater zeal in their master's work than the servants of God. "Blessed is the man whom the Lord when he comes shall find so doing. He shall make him ruler over all that he hath." "The slothful servant shall be cast into outer darkness." Think not that ministers alone are called upon to employ their gifts to the advantage of the Church. All the members of the natural body are mutually helpful. The eye is the light of the whole body, its office is useful and honourable. But shall the finger or the foot say, 'Because we are not eyes, we may take our rest; the body has no service to expect from us.' The lips, not only of good minis-

ters, but of righteous persons in every rank of life, feed many. There are, indeed, eminent Christians on whom the Spirit of God has bestowed a very moderate portion of the gifts fitted to profit others. But to whomsoever little is given, of him little shall be required. Usefulness is not dependent on natural genius. A minister or church member whose talents, though below mediocrity, have been improved with diligence and humility, is a far more useful member of society than the man of brilliant parts, who, trusting to himself, is apt to become intolerant and self-willed. Great talents have often been a great plague to the Church, and men of moderate endowments have often been the happy instruments of making many wise.

It has been already observed that we must distinguish between the use of the gifts of the Spirit, and the exercise of His saving graces. The former are designed for the profit of others, and the latter, next to the glory of God, for our own benefit. But we cannot expect the Divine blessing in the use of our gifts if we are careless about the prosperity of our own souls. Besides, it is necessary, if even for the benefit of others, to mingle the exercise of the graces of the Spirit with the use of our gifts. Those are most likely to have their labours crowned with success who maintain a lively faith, a fervent charity, and a prayerful intercourse with Heaven. The history of the Church abounds in melancholy instances of the heresies, schisms, and mischiefs of every kind produced by unsanctified gifts, or by the

remains of corruption in men, otherwise distinguished for holiness.

Although in our ordinary modes of speech we distinguish between the gifts and the graces of the Spirit, yet they both come under the common appellation of grace, in the language of the Holy Ghost. They are the effects of God's undeserved favour, and gratitude should powerfully constrain us to use them according to the will and for the glory of the Giver. To every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ, and as was said to His ancient disciples, "Freely ye have received, freely give." We have not received for ourselves only. The steward of a great house would be faithless to his trust, if he should appropriate to himself his master's goods. He would be worthy of punishment were he to suffer the children to pine away through the scanty supply of that bread committed to his care, to be dispensed to them in proper season. We must be good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Great is the kindness of the good Spirit. He not only bestows on us those favours that are necessary for our own happiness, but enables us to be public benefactors. We have bread enough and to spare. Faithfully improving the talents and opportunities we have received, we know not to what extent we may be the happy almoners of His goodness by ministering the spirit of faith and love and of a sound mind to neighbours and friends. Think of the way in which the Apostle Paul employed the noble gifts that had

been bestowed on him. He was deeply impressed with a sense of that grace which had so greatly enriched him. He acknowledged that by the grace of God he was what he was, and the grace bestowed upon him was not in vain. He went everywhere bearing aloft the lamp of the Gospel, and diffusing the light of salvation amongst the nations that were dwelling in darkness. Nothing could damp his ardour, nothing could intimidate his soul. So fierce was the opposition he encountered, it almost seemed as if all the devils in hell had put forth their united efforts against him, for he could protest by the rejoicing of Christians in Christ Jesus that "he died daily." But His love cast out all fear. If the devil had offered him the kingdoms of this world and their glory, on condition of slumbering on his throne, and leaving the work and the afflictions of the Gospel to others, his answer would have been ready. The reproach of Christ and His sufferings for the Gentiles were incomparably more glorious in his estimation than all the material splendour which can dazzle the eye or charm the imagination of men. Having the high honour of being put in trust with a ministry of unspeakable importance to his fellow-men, he cared not what he suffered, if he might finish his course with joy, and at the tribunal of Christ meet with men, women, and children who had been converted or edified by his labours. It would be of great service to ministers frequently to read and ponder the sublime thoughts of Paul on this subject (Eph. iii. 1, 10). Our sphere of usefulness

is far from being so extensive as his, and we cannot lay claim to such eminent accomplishments; but we are no less bound to improve the talents we have, and fill up our days with profitable work. At the judgment-seat we shall not be asked to account for what has been given to others, but for what has been put in our own trust. The man who had received one talent was punished because he had not used it for the interest of his Lord. If he had made it two talents, it would have been said to him as well as to the man who had made five talents ten, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

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## VI.—COMPLIANCE WITH HIS MOTIONS.

"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."—ROMANS viii. 14.

Here it is needful carefully to distinguish between mere mental emotion and the influences of the Holy Spirit. "Beloved," says the Apostle John, "believe not every spirit, for many false prophets are gone out into the world." As false prophets were often themselves deceived, so in an age when there are few pretenders to inspiration, powerful impulses may be felt in the soul, and may assume the appearance of suggestions from the Spirit of God when they are only the reveries of a heated imagination, or the delusive wiles of the prince of



darkness, who can still transform himself into an angel of light. Of this, alas ! we have many painful proofs in the history of the Church, not only in primitive times, but since the Reformation, and in our own day. We ought, therefore, to examine by the Word of God every strong inclination which we feel in our hearts, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth. It is His province to lead us into all truth, to incline our hearts to the love of God and of men, and to teach us effectively that "wisdom which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated ; full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." Those inward desires which are not consistent with such gracious designs cannot be from the Spirit of God. Nothing can be more dishonouring to a virtuous man than to accuse him of counsels and actions that tend to the subversion of justice and the disturbance of society ; and so, to ascribe to the Spirit such suggestions as tend to the overthrow of morality or the injury of religion, is to reproach that Divine Being who is the author of all the goodness in the world.

But when we feel powerfully drawn to comply with the will of God as revealed in His Word, we have no reason to suspect from whence the impulse comes. All tendencies towards goodness in the minds even of unregenerate persons are from the Spirit. His common operations go before, and prepare the way for His saving work on the souls of

men. By the Spirit, Christ preached unto the sinners of the old world in the days of Noah. But they were stubborn and disobedient, and therefore the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." By continued opposition to His operations in our hearts, we are in danger of falling into the condition of the Israelites of old, "who rebelled against God, and vexed his Holy Spirit, wherefore he turned to be their enemy, and fought against them." As some men extinguish the clamours of conscience by plunging into sensuality or worldly business, there are others who silence the voice of the Spirit within them by short-lived fits of devotion, or attention to mere forms of duty. The devil will be well satisfied if he can so easily quiet the commotions of a heart meditating escape from his tyranny. If a man in spiritual anxiety rests satisfied with empty wishes like Balaam, or a superficial appearance of goodness, he complies not with the desires of the Spirit of Truth, whose office it is to take of the things of Christ and show them unto men; but with the desires of spirits of darkness, whose constant aim is to draw sinners away from Christ and holiness. The devil cares little what men put in the room of Christ, but the Spirit of God will not suffer any one who follows His guidance to rest anywhere, except in Him who is the only Saviour from sin and wrath.

Believers have the Spirit dwelling within them, and ought at all times to yield to His motions, walking onward in the path of duty, without turning

aside to the right hand or to the left. But there are seasons in which they partake of His influence in more than ordinary measure, when He sheds abroad the love of God in their hearts, and gives them fresh, cheering discoveries of the grace of their Redeemer. At such times their souls make them like the chariots of Amminadib. The most self-denying duties appear pleasant: they run without weariness, and walk without fainting in the ways of the Lord. Such opportunities for abounding in the work of the Lord should not be neglected. David would by no means suffer them to pass unimproved. When he heard the Lord saying, "Seek ye my face," his heart replied, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." When he found his soul elevated by the majesty of the Lord, he said, "My heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise." Such exhortations are not unnecessary. The flesh so lusteth against the Spirit in believers that even a Peter and a Paul were under the necessity of watching diligently against the allurements of sin, for they felt a law in their members warring against the law of their mind. Paul even tells us that he needed a thorn in the flesh to prevent the misimprovement of an extraordinary favour.

At other times the people of God may feel powerfully drawn to the performance of loving services to their fellow-men. Paul was called a madman for encountering so many deaths for the benefit of others, but, "Whether we be beside ourselves," says he, "it is to God, or whether we be sober, it is for your

cause, for the love of Christ constraineth us." It was beneath the influence of good impressions on the hearts of the princes of Israel that they contributed so liberally to the building of the temple at Jerusalem, and David did not suffer the opportunity to escape of exhorting the people always to retain as high a regard for the glory of God and the welfare of Israel. Moses displayed no less joy when he found that the Israelites had been stirred up by the influence of the Spirit to give their gold and silver in such abundance for the erection of a sanctuary where the Lord might dwell in the midst of His people.

When conscience smites us, for some sin committed, or some duty omitted, or carelessly performed, the inward workings of grief and shame and the desires after reformation we experience may be viewed as the suggestions of the Holy Spirit awakening us to repentance. To dispel our fears we ought not therefore to fly to business or pleasure, but to the mercy-seat. We ought prayerfully to consider our ways, to remember from whence we are fallen, to repent and do our first works.

It is a good maxim in common life, to defer nothing till to-morrow which can be done to-day. Nowhere has this maxim more need to be observed than in the sphere of religion. The wind, indeed, "bloweth where it listeth." The mariner cannot hold it in his fists, or let it forth at his pleasure. But God teaches him discretion in the management of his business, and he seizes the proper time for entering upon his voyage. If he should loiter and procrastinate

minate when the favourable breeze is blowing, he may be obliged to remain in port till he finds it is too late to set out. The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light, but the children of light may learn from the children of this world to be wise and to be ashamed of their own folly.

Christians ! call to mind how long you refused compliance with the Spirit's call ; may not your own former folly teach you wisdom ? If you did evil in your days of darkness, do not repeat such conduct now that you have become the children of light. Such behaviour will certainly be attended with peculiar aggravation. Do not, therefore, grieve the Holy Spirit by acting like the children of night and of darkness, when, through His grace, you have been made children of the light and of the day.

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#### VII.—SHUNNING TO GRIEVE THE SPIRIT.

"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."—EPHESIANS iv. 30.

It is certain that the Spirit of God cannot be grieved in the ordinary sense of the expression. But the word has been chosen by Infinite Wisdom to express an important truth. Nothing can impress our minds with a deeper sense of the malignity of sin than to represent it as a grief to the Spirit of promise. Who does not shudder at the thought of grieving that blessed Person to whom we are indebted not only for our natural, but

for our spiritual and eternal life? When we commit those sins by which He is said to be grieved, our guilt is not the less, because the expression must be understood in a figurative sense. We do those things that would grieve Him, if grief could make an impression upon a Divine Being. If He is not actually grieved, the reason is in Himself, not in us. We do what we can to interrupt the blessedness of the ever-blessed God, the fountain of all the blessedness that is found among the children of men. God is represented by Jeremiah as saying, "Oh! do not this abominable thing that I hate." By another of His servants He tells us that "he is pressed under the iniquities of his people, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves." He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, or look upon iniquity.

Displeasing to God wherever witnessed, sin is doubly offensive when seen in those in whom He condescends to dwell as in a temple. The Lord was in ancient times exceedingly displeased with the profanation of His sanctuary. His wrath broke forth like a devouring flame against the two sons of Aaron, who offered incense with unhallowed fire in the Holy Place. A great king of Judah was suddenly struck with leprosy because he presumed to profane the temple by an unhallowed approach to God. These instances of Divine displeasure are instructive to us. "If any man," says Paul, "defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy, for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." In another passage, he tells those Christians who did

not possess their vessels in sanctification and honour, that they had forgotten the glorious relation in which they stood towards God as the temples of His Holy Spirit (1 Cor. iii. 17 ; 1 Thess. iv. 4).

All sin committed by Christians grieves the Spirit of God, for it is His office to cleanse them from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit. Still, it can scarcely be said that believers grieve the Spirit by those infirmities which are the natural and unavoidable results of the "body of death" within them, and whose presence and power they bitterly lament. Paul had no reason to think that he had grieved the Spirit, in the sense of his own exhortation, when he could say, "The good that I would I do not : but the evil which I would not, that I do. So then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (Rom. vii. 19). But Peter had good reason to know that the Spirit was grieved, when in a moment of weakness he wilfully denied his Master. Some of those sins by which the Spirit is specially grieved may be learned from the passage in which the injunction occurs. We grieve the Spirit of God by rash anger, for He is a Spirit of love and meekness and gentleness. We grieve Him if chargeable with dishonesty, than which nothing can bring a greater reproach upon our Christian profession. We grieve Him by unruly passions, malicious words, and all kinds of corrupt communication ; for it is part of His gracious work to shed abroad the love of God in our hearts, that we may be kind one to another, tender-hearted,

forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us (Eph. iv. 27-32). He is the Spirit of holiness, and how much He is grieved with all impurities of the flesh, the Apostle Paul shows in 2 Cor. vi.

As it is the office of the Spirit to comfort as well as to sanctify, He must be grieved when His consolations appear small in our eyes. Since these are more than sufficient to compensate for the loss of all the joys which flesh and sense can give, to think lightly of them is to treat their Author with contempt. If there be any consolation in Christ, any fellowship of the Spirit, or any truth in the promise, that he who endures hardship for Christ's sake shall be recompensed a hundredfold,—let us not grieve the Spirit by bereaving ourselves of His comforting influence, though it be with a view of preserving our fortunes or even our lives.

Some are guilty of despising the consolations of the Spirit, though in the advancement of their secular interests they neither deny the truth nor violate the laws of righteousness. They are so eager in worldly pursuits, and cold-hearted towards the pleasures of religion, they plunge so deeply into the enjoyments and affairs of the present life, that they have no time or inclination to meditate upon the love of God, and those precious discoveries of truth and goodness by which the Holy Spirit carries on His comforting work. It is His office to raise our souls above the world, to inspire us with sublime views, and fix our hearts upon those grand objects which are despised by earthly-minded



men. He cannot but be grieved, therefore, when the people of God obstinately cleave to the dust, and refuse to rejoice in His consolations.

Have we not reason likewise to add, that the Comforter is grieved when good men reject His consolations, and give themselves up to immoderate grief. It is not the will of God that His people should spend their days in unavailing sorrow. He is kind and gracious, and takes pleasure in their happiness. He hath stored His Word with precious comforts. He hath sent His Spirit to apply them to the souls of His servants. If they harden themselves in sorrow, they refuse His precious gifts; by their complaints, they dishonour Him before the world, and obstruct the sanctifying as well as the comforting work of the Spirit; for "the joy of the Lord is our strength."

Grieve not, therefore, the Holy Spirit of promise by counteracting His operations. Should He discontinue His kind influences and leave you to yourselves, how wretched shall be your condition! Remember David's mournful complaints, and his sorrowing prayers (Ps. xxxii. 51). Remember the sad case of Solomon, when the Lord was displeased with him for his manifold offences, after he had appeared unto him twice. Remember the tears of Peter. Consider the love manifested by the Spirit to yourselves, in being willing to make your souls and even your bodies His dwelling-place. Think of the guilt and injury incurred by grieving and provoking Him to depart from you; you will lose your comfort, your love, your spiritual health and vigour,

you may be compelled to complain of the terrors of the Lord ; and for days or months or years you may be made to go mourning without the sun ; above all, you cannot tell how fatally you may be suffered to fall, thereby dishonouring your Christian profession, grieving the hearts of the godly, and giving occasion for triumph to the enemies of the cross of Christ.

On the other hand, those who readily comply with the dictates and motions of the Holy Spirit enjoy a peace which passeth all understanding. They walk in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost. They enjoy a rich anointing of the oil of gladness, which makes their face to shine, and strangers to godliness are sometimes gained to Christ by the attractive influence of their Christian graces.

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#### VIII.—PROMOTING HIS DESIGNS.

“And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth ; . . . he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me : for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.”—JOHN xvi. 8, 13, 14.

The great purpose for which the Spirit is promised and given, is the manifestation of the glory of Christ, in the advancement of His kingdom through the conversion of sinners, and the building up of saints in holiness and comfort, through faith unto salvation. For this end, the Spirit bestows His gifts, consolations, and graces upon the children of men. Everything done in opposition to these

designs must be offensive, and everything done in a proper way for their accomplishment must be well-pleasing in His sight. "Ye do always resist the Holy Spirit," said Stephen to his persecutors. "As your fathers did, so also do ye." The Jews imagined that they only resisted men like themselves, when they opposed the ministrations of the ancient prophets, but in reality they resisted the Holy Ghost, who spake by their lips, and wrote by their pens, those precious truths through which He carries on His gracious designs in the world.

To resist the Holy Spirit must be extremely wicked. The murder of Stephen would have been an atrocious action if he had been only an innocent man unjustly put to death by an unruly mob. But the malignity of the crime consisted in the opposition and indignity done to the Spirit of God. Stephen was a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost. The doctrine he taught was the ministration of the Spirit, the miracles he wrought were the seals of the Spirit, the words he spake were in "demonstration of the Spirit and of power." When he was cruelly stoned to death, his murderers did despite to "the Spirit of grace."

It is sad to think that professing Christians have too often imitated the unbelieving Jews in resisting the Holy Ghost, by oppressing and persecuting their fellow-men, for no other reason than their fidelity to Christ, and their zeal in furthering His gracious purposes. The Spirit employs men as His instruments, and what is done to them is in effect done to Himself. In the absence of violent persecution,

His work is often hindered by a spirit of strife and controversy prevailing among Christians. When the apostle had reckoned up the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22, 23), he adds this important injunction, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another."

The gifts of the Spirit are bestowed in varying measure, but they are all vouchsafed for the same great purpose. Instead, therefore, of despising some, and envying others, we ought to unite in glorifying God for His goodness to the Church and to the world—as manifested in these diversified operations. Did Moses envy those to whom God had given His Spirit, as well as to himself? Did he not rebuke Joshua when, in his mistaken zeal for himself, he was led to envy others. None of his brethren in the apostleship envied Paul because he was enabled to "labour more abundantly than they all." On the contrary, when they saw the grace bestowed on one who had been a bitter enemy of their Lord, they gladly gave him the right hand of fellowship. For his part, Paul rejoiced in the gifts bestowed on his fellow-labourers. He encouraged and strengthened those who were far inferior to himself, and did all that lay in his power to promote the success of their labours in the churches. His conduct in this respect is well worthy of our imitation. How much evil might have been prevented, how much good might have been done, if those ministers who desired to be found

faithful to Christ had always been as zealous in promoting one another's usefulness as they have often been in destroying it. Paul rejoiced greatly that Christ was preached, even when the preachers wanted to bring his own name into disrepute. Like him, let us detest the mean and selfish spirit which would obstruct the usefulness of any man whose heart is bent upon advancing the honour of Christ, and promoting the spiritual welfare of his fellow-men.

Nevertheless, it must be kept in mind that there is no infringement of the rule of charity in our vigorous opposition of all error. Paul rejoiced that Christ was preached even by those men who preached Him out of strife and contention, supposing they would add affliction to his bonds. But he was far from rejoicing that Christ was preached (if He could be said to be preached at all) by the men who joined the works of the law with the righteousness of Christ as the ground of our hope. In his estimation, these men preached another Gospel, which yet was not another, but a subversion of the Gospel of Christ. He wished that these men were cut off from the Church as her troublers—the Achans in the commonwealth of the spiritual Israel! Our duty to the Spirit, as well as to our Lord Jesus Christ, demands zeal for the truth and purity of the Gospel, as well as unflinching opposition to every form of false teaching, which would privily bring in damnable heresies (2 Pet. ii. 1; Gal. iii.) It is the office of the Spirit to enlighten men in the knowledge of Christ, and of the way of salvation; and we co-operate with Him

in His work when we hold forth the word of life, pure and unadulterated, to the world, and contend earnestly for the purity of the faith.

Whatever friendship we cherish for those persons who promulgate unscriptural doctrines, truth claims a warmer attachment, and we must oppose to the uttermost every sentiment that may prove dangerous to the souls of men, or that may become the seed of other errors still worse than itself. At the same time, we ought to maintain and promote the interests of truth and holiness in a spirit of love and meekness and goodwill to all (1 Pet. ii. 1).

The Spirit of God needs no help from us in doing His work,—He can perform it as well without instruments as with them; but He honours us in employing the gifts and graces with which He has enriched our souls, and in furnishing us with opportunities of being useful to one another, and thus binding fast those cords of love by which life is rendered sweet and pleasant. The happiness of heaven itself will be increased by the recollection of our mutual beneficence.

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#### IX.—MOTIVES TO THE PERFORMANCE OF OUR DUTIES TO THE SPIRIT.

“I beseech you, . . . for the love of the Spirit.”—ROM. xv. 30.

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh.”—ACTS ii. 17.

There are many considerations fitted to impress our minds with a sense of our obligation to attend to the duties which we owe to the Spirit.

*First.—The divinity of His Person.*

He is God and not man. To trifle with our fellow-men is rude,—to neglect the duties we owe them is a violation of the social bond; but if a man sin against a Divine Person, who can comprehend the exceeding sinfulness of the action!

*Second.—The Spirit is the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of God.*

If we owe any regard to Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, let us show it by our reverence of the Eternal Spirit, through whom He offered up Himself, a spotless sacrifice to God. If we think with gratitude of the everlasting love of the Father, who saves and calls us with a holy calling, let us give a cordial and affectionate reception to that Spirit, by whom He applies to our souls the benefits prepared for us before the foundation of the world.

*Third.—We live under the New Testament dispensation of the grace of God, under which it was promised that the Spirit should be liberally communicated to the sons of men.*

This promise published by the ancient prophets, was frequently repeated by the Lord, and specially dwelt upon, in the discourse which He addressed to His disciples, for their consolation, before He suffered.

By the rich effusion of the Spirit in the first days of the Gospel, we have obtained a clearer revelation of the grace of God than was enjoyed by the saints under the Old Testament. According to the genius of the present dispensation, we are

admitted to more intimate fellowship with God, and can use greater boldness in our approaches to the throne of mercy. To the grace of the Spirit we are indebted for these distinguishing privileges. The Old Testament believers called Him the "free Spirit," and the "good Spirit;" but we rejoice in Him as the "Spirit of Grace." Our ingratitude admits of no excuse, if we do not keep at a great distance from everything that may grieve or offend Him.

*Fourth.—Our own interest should induce us to give the Holy Spirit the honour which is His due.*

We depend on Him for the life and happiness of our souls. In our unconverted state it was owing to His restraining influence that we did not plunge into all manner of wickedness; and if we have now any good thing in us toward the Lord God of Israel, we are indebted for it to the blessed Spirit. He who has begun the good work must carry it on till it is perfected. Of ourselves, we can do nothing but what is evil, but if we are led by Him, we shall go from strength to strength, and at last appear in Zion before God. Men value the particular kind of happiness which suits their taste. Worldly men place their happiness in the things of the present life, and they will not rashly cast them away. Christians place their happiness in enjoying and resembling God; surely, therefore, it is fitting that they show a due regard to that blessed Spirit who alone can shed abroad the love of God in their hearts, and beautify them with His image.

*Fifth.—We are baptised in the name of the*



*Spirit as well as in that of the Father and of the Son.*

By this seal of the covenant we are brought into special relationship with God. We should often reflect upon our baptism—that we may neither forget what to expect from each Person of the Godhead, nor what solemn engagements we are under to render to them the honour and worship which they justly claim.

A human covenant is esteemed so sacred that no man disannulleth or addeth thereto. How inexcusable are those who wilfully disregard their covenant engagements with the most high God.

*Sixth.—Our own prayers lay on us a solemn obligation to commit ourselves to the guidance of the good Spirit.*

A regard to the command of Jesus will lead us often to pray for the Spirit. And why do we pray for Him, but that we may be enlightened, guided, sanctified, comforted, and prepared for the inheritance of the saints in light; and not, surely, that we may insult, despise, and rebel against Him. If we pray for the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit, that our prayers may not be turned into sin. We pray for the Spirit when we pray for any spiritual blessing. They are all given by His hand, and every petition for them is a bond laid upon us to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.

*Seventh.—Sins against the Spirit are represented by our Lord as very dangerous.*

One of them is declared by Him to be unpardon-

able. We have reason to bless God that every sin against the Spirit is not as fatal to the souls of men as blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. This unpardonable iniquity cannot be committed by any man who has received the Spirit as a sanctifier. But from the malignity of that most pernicious of all transgressions, we may reasonably infer that every sin against the Spirit must be exceedingly offensive to each of the three Divine Persons. To the Spirit Himself, whose grace and condescension is despised. To the Father and to the Son, whose agent He is in applying the blessings of salvation to the children of men.

It may be added, that other sins may lead to blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Those in whom He dwells, as in a temple, cannot, indeed, fall into this iniquity, because the Spirit Himself is their powerful preserver. But shall they venture to the brink of this awful sin by grieving or resisting Him, knowing He will effectually keep them from falling over the precipice? This would be to sin because grace abounds,—to turn the grace of the Spirit into lasciviousness. Besides, they may be left to fall into very grievous transgressions, as a punishment for their rashness, and thus stain themselves with spots very unlike the spots of God's children.

Are you still strangers to the renewing and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit? Cry mightily to God, that He may be given to you as a spirit of light and love, of power, and of a sound

mind. Let the Word of the truth of the Gospel be daily in your hands; let it be fixed in your memories; let it be the theme of prayerful meditation. The Bible is the sword of the Spirit. While you read, ere ever you are aware, you may be made to see wondrous things out of God's law, to taste its heavenly sweetness, to feel its divine power. The Spirit of God has effectually convinced, enlightened, and converted thousands of sinners whilst they were attending to the Word written, or the Word preached. Wait for Him, therefore, in the use of appointed means; and while waiting, guard against everything in thought, speech, or behaviour likely to quench His gracious influences.

Have you already received the Spirit? Keep alive upon your minds a sense of the duty which you owe Him. Think of the many proofs He has given of His infinite grace and condescension. Consider how wicked and dangerous it is to grieve Him, and how dependent you are on His help and protection. Blessed is the man whose strength is in God. "He that soweth to the spirit reapeth life everlasting." If we be led by the Spirit, then we are the sons of God; and if sons, "then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."

